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A SHORT HISTORY OF  
RUSSIAN MUSIC



A SHORT HISTORY OF  
RUSSIAN MUSIC  
BY ARTHUR POUGIN



TRANSLATED BY  
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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE extraordinarily rapid development of the Russian school of music has been preoccupying the world of art for something like thirty-five years, and has now engaged the interest and attention of the whole of Europe. Previous to this, it was a matter of common knowledge that a great composer, of the name of Glinka, had been born in Russia, and that he had left his country two superb works : *A Life for the Tsar* and *Rousslan and Ludmilla*. The names of two or three other composers, such as Serov and Dargomijsky, were also known ; but it was not realised at that time that music had taken such deep root in the country. For us Frenchmen in particular the splendid Russian concerts organised at Paris by Nicholas Rubinstein for the Exhibition of 1878 were a revelation ; they made us acquainted with artists whose names we hardly knew and of whose works we were completely ignorant.



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From that day the young Russian school has worked with eager activity and has forged ahead. It has not merely asserted with regularity and increasing emphasis its existence and progress at home; it has also spread abroad, moving in Germany mainly in the direction of dramatic, and in France of symphonic, music. The result is that the names of the musicians belonging to the school have been popularized on all sides, while their works have become familiar to everyone who cares to busy himself with matters of outstanding artistic importance.

It is not easy, however, to give a historical sketch of Russian music when one travels outside the limits of the work of these later composers. The brilliant school of to-day, with its strong personality, has not sprung in a moment from Nature's womb, and it is interesting to see through what tentative struggles it has had to pass before it could actually come to birth. But it is just here that difficulties commence. Those who would like to undertake such a piece of research are prevented from getting to the original sources by general ignorance of the language. I believe too that even in Russia there is nothing which

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could strictly be called a history of Russian music. At the most a certain amount of work—a good deal, in point of fact—has been done on particular chapters of history, and on some of the more or less contemporary musicians who occupy an important place in it. I make no pretence therefore, as may be imagined, of going so far as to trace a history of Russian music in the following pages. My task is, I consider, far more modest. As the title<sup>1</sup> I have given to it indicates, it is merely an essay: something in the nature of a series of notes for the history which still has to be written, accompanied by purely personal impressions. The sole aim of these notes and impressions is to make known in France the importance of the musical movement that has been going on in Russia during the last fifty years. However incomplete my work may be, I hope that the perusal of it will be of service to those who want to keep abreast of whatever deals with the progress of music in the different countries of Europe. I offer my apologies in advance for such gaps and defects as I am aware it is bound to contain.

<sup>1</sup> *Essai Historique sur la Musique en Russie.*



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# A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIAN MUSIC

## CHAPTER I

The origins of Russian music.—Folk-songs.—Church music. Berezovsky, Bortniansky, The Imperial Chapel.

THE real origins of Russian music must be looked for in music written for the Church and in folk-song. This has been shown by one of the most learned Russian writers on music, Youry Arnold, in a book published in his native tongue. Further light was thrown by him on this question in two publications written in German and issued at Leipzig while he was editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, the paper which was formally founded by Schumann and eventually became the organ of the Wagnerian party. The first of these publications was called *Die Tonkunst in Russland bis zur Einführung des abendländischen Musik und Notensystems*<sup>1</sup> (Leipzig, 1867); the second,

<sup>1</sup> Music in Russia before the introduction of the Western scale and notation.



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which consisted of a series of eight articles that appeared in the paper I have just mentioned, was entitled *Die Entwicklung der russischen Nationaloper*.<sup>1</sup> Arnold himself, who died in 1898, at the age of 87, was professor of musical theory at the Conservatoire at Moscow and of musical history at the University of that town. He published, amongst other things, a *Theory of Musical Production*, a biography of Liszt, and some interesting Memoirs.

Russian folk-song, with its peculiar flavour and its originality of harmony, rhythm, and melody, has been skilfully borrowed and turned to account by every Russian composer since Glinka, which is one reason why the music of the present day has so much individuality. Another Russian author, Hermann Laroche, has described its qualities not only with skill, but with the sort of pride that is entirely legitimate. This is how he speaks of those strange and characteristic popular airs : "The melody moves in a piquant, unforeseen way with fantastic leaps and bounds and graceful, decorative outlines. The harmony is based on a system of transparent clearness with plagal and phrygian cadences that seem to open up distant horizons to the mind. The rhythm has a careless, leisurely stride, and allows various kinds of movement to unfold

<sup>1</sup> The development of Russian national opera.



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with the capriciousness of unchartered liberty. In all this you have a picture of the Russian people. You see, reflected as it were in some unknown world in little, the Russian with his characteristically free and easy ways, his clear, sober mind, his need of elbow-room, and his antipathy for being shackled with any kind of constraint. In short, if you consider the luxuriant way in which our music flourishes, springing, as it does, with inexhaustible variety, spontaneously from the soil, and compare it with the sterility of our plastic and representative arts, you will realise the depths of our private, intimate life and the richly lyrical gifts of our nation, which have lain concealed beneath the poverty and uncouthness of the earlier forms of art. I grant, if you like, that nature in Russia is far from picturesque, that our costumes are abominable, that our entire method of life escapes the painter's brush and the sculptor's chisel. I grant all that, as I say. On the other hand, our folk-song is so profound in its appeal, it is so enchantingly varied and so perfectly new in its form, that we can look to the future with complete confidence and face with assurance the artistic destiny of our country. Our national songs are a true guarantee of the worth of Russian music, and are quite sufficient evidence of our aptitude for art. But this is not the only proof we have.

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We can boast with pride of a great Russian musician who was nourished on our popular songs and preserved their character in imperishable works, and by that means was able to depict with inimitable art the minutest idiosyncrasies of the Russian people. This great musician and master was Michael Ivanovich Glinka.”<sup>1</sup>

Another Russian author, César Cui, who, although a soldier, is also a composer, has written of the folk-songs from the technical point of view as follows : “ Russian folk-songs are usually written within a very restricted compass, and only rarely move beyond the interval of a fifth or a sixth. The older the song the narrower is the range of its compass. The theme is always short, sometimes extending no farther than two bars, but these two bars are repeated as often as the exigencies of the text demand. . .

“ The folk-songs are sung either by a single voice or by a chorus. In the latter case a single voice leads off with the subject, and then the chorus takes it up. The harmonisation of these tunes is traditional and extremely original. The different voices of the chorus approach each other until they form a unison, or else separate into chords (only the chords

<sup>1</sup> Hermann Laroche : *Glinka and the part he played in the History of Music.*

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are often not filled in), and, generally speaking, a melody treated polyphonically ends in a unison.

“The songs for a single voice are frequently accompanied on a tiny stringed instrument called a ‘balalaïka’—a kind of guitar with a triangular belly, the strings of which are either plucked or set vibrating by a *glissando*. As to the songs for chorus, they are rarely provided with an accompaniment; when they do have one, it is played on a sort of oboe which uses the melody as the basis of a number of contrapuntal improvisations which are, no doubt, not much in accordance with the strict rules of music, but are exceedingly picturesque.

“Russian folk-songs may be classified in the following way as : singing games, or songs sung on feast days to the accompaniment of different games and dances; songs for special occasions, of which the wedding song is the most popular type; street songs, or serenades for chorus of a jovial or burlesque character; songs of the ‘burlaks,’ or of the barge-haulers; and songs for a single voice of every sort and kind.

“I have already said a few words incidentally on the intrinsic worth of these Russian songs from the æsthetic and artistic point of view, and I cannot help insisting on it. It really is impossible to estimate their value when you consider their variety, the expressive-



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ness of the feelings they contain, and the richness and originality of their themes. Some of them are marked by masculine energy, by savage, unrestrained vehemence, or, again, by calm, majestic dignity. Others are graceful and attractive, and charm us by their careless gaiety. Many are stamped with a profound melancholy : you feel the grief in them struggling to expand, the resigned submission to a cruel and rigorous fate. Some have their origin in the clear, untroubled pools of poetry, and move in a serene, ideal, lyric world under a fair-weather sky : these are they that show us noble natures and the hearts of lovers. Others again, with slow and stately measure, speak with the voice of pomp and circumstance.”<sup>1</sup>

Russian folk-songs, which are interesting from all points of view, and are a source of justifiable pride to the Russians, were naturally bound to form the subject of much valuable research. A number of collections of these songs have been published by some very distinguished musical scholars, who have discovered the authentic versions, transcribed them with the most scrupulous care, and harmonised them with such skill and tact that their characteristic style and colour have been faithfully preserved. The oldest of these collections is that of Pratch, a well-known musician of Prague.

<sup>1</sup> César Cui: *La Musique en Russie*.

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It contains as many as 149 songs, and was published for the first time in 1790; a second edition of it in two volumes appeared in 1815. This is the collection from which Beethoven took the Russian themes which he used in the quartets dedicated to Count Razoumovsky. The composer Balakirev produced in 1866 a collection of forty songs, and another of 100 has been formed by Rimsky-Korsakov. I cannot mention every publication of this sort that we owe to Kashin, Shishkin, Klutcharov, de Santis, Famintzin, Villebois, Prokounin, Bernard, Melgounov, and others.

My excellent and regretted colleague, Gustave Bertrand, who died young, once gave some delightful specimens of Russian folk-songs in two articles in the *Chronique musicale* for October 1 and November 1, 1873. In discussing the methods of performing the singing games mentioned above by César Cui, he gave the following interesting details: "The performance of these Russian village singing games is unfailingly picturesque, sometimes even somewhat scenic. The chorus, arranged in a circle, plays the part of narrator and commentator like the chorus in the dramas and comedies of antiquity. In the middle of the circle are two or more peasants of either sex, whose business it is to represent the characters in the story—the couple in love, the husband

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and wife, the mother and daughter, the wicked stepmother, and so forth ; each peasant having to dance or act while singing the scrap of dialogue allotted to him or her, as the case may be. Sometimes the chorus sings continuously ; in other singing games there is a kind of leader, who recites the tale, while the chorus merely repeats at the end of each strophe, or adds on its own account, an exclamatory remark or perhaps some brief reflexion. There is no rigorous code, of course, for all this, but the moment there is any indication of action or of dialogue, the performance of the singing game becomes partially scenic."

Just as much care has been given by the leaders of the young Russian school to the study of church music, which, with folk-song, has been one of the primary elements in the constitution of their modern music. As far as that goes, the two elements are readily fused : one finds, for instance, in a very large number of national folk-songs the form and tonality of ancient Greek music. We have it on the authority of Hermann Laroche that the music of the people falls into one of three categories : the dorian mode (the scale of E without accidentals), the æolian or hypo-dorian mode (the scale of A minor without the leading note), or the hypo-phrygian (the key of G without the F sharp).



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It goes without saying that music for the Church has, like folk-song, given rise to some interesting lines of study and to numerous publications. Excellent editions of liturgical music of the Russian Church, harmonised in a variety of styles, have been prepared under the auspices of the Imperial Chapel of St. Petersburg, and the Society of Collectors of old Russian Manuscripts has published in *facsimile* two ancient musical grammars. Nor has there been any dearth of historical research. Numerous essays on the subject have either appeared separately or have been inserted in the periodical reports of different learned societies. Besides this, Prince Nicholas Youssipov, who was well known for his enlightened dilettantism, wrote in French a *History of Church Music in Russia*<sup>1</sup> (Paris, 1862), which unfortunately makes rather laborious reading, but is accompanied by a selection of ancient and modern church tunes. I have also read favourable accounts of another interesting and important work published in Russian at Moscow (2 vols., 1867-8) by P. Dmitri Razoumovsky, who was professor at the Conservatoire there. Finally, we owe to the same scholar a valuable study of the famous church choirs at the court of the Tsar at Moscow, of which the Imperial Chapel

<sup>1</sup> The work is incomplete, the first volume alone having appeared.



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of to-day is the direct lineal descendant. We learn from this that ever since the fifteenth century the court at Moscow maintained a church choir, and that in the following century, in the reign of Ivan the Terrible (who, by the way, was a composer himself, and is supposed to have written at least one hymn tune), this choir had some good material in it. "At first," according to Platon de Waxel, "it only contained some thirty singers, but at the beginning of the seventeenth century this number was doubled. The whole body of them never sang at once. They were divided into several different choirs, each containing from twelve to eighteen voices, who officiated in the different churches belonging to the court. Two of these choirs were attached to the person of the sovereign. The Tsar Alexis, who, like his son, Peter the Great, was fond of singing in church, summoned some musicians from Kiev, who introduced modern notation into his chapel. Vocal music in eight, twelve, and even twenty-four parts soon had such a success that the court singers began to give performances outside the palace. They learned a number of Polish hymns, which were translated into Russian by the celebrated Simeon de Polotsk and set to music by the singer Vasily Titov; they also sang music written by Polish composers. Under Peter the Great, a number of choirs

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attached to the private chapels of members of the Imperial family were broken up, and on the death of that famous monarch his own special choir of more than twenty voices, which accompanied him in his travels and campaigns, was likewise suppressed. At this point the researches of Dmitri Razoumovsky break off, but it is nevertheless known that the choirs of court singers continued to exist during succeeding reigns. The celebrated Alexis Razoumovsky was a member of the Imperial Chapel in the days of the Empress Anne, quitting it in 1757 to enter that of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth Petrovna. It seems that at this period the Imperial Chapel was already in possession of its present organisation, while actually being the outcome of the Chapel of the Tsars of Moscow.”<sup>1</sup>

My readers will be familiar with the immense reputation of the choir of the Imperial Chapel, the singers in which have voices of an exceptional character and unusually wide range, and are carefully selected from amongst the peasants in Ukraine, the province famed for its beautiful voices. Adolphe Adam, the French composer, has left us his enthusiastic testimony to the effect left on him by these voices and by the vocal technique of the singers

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Saint-Pétersbourg*, July 23–August 4, 1881.

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on an occasion when he was admitted to hear the chapel choir during a stay he made at St. Petersburg in 1840: "Church music," says Adam, "is superior to any other kind of music in Russia, because it alone is typical, and is not an imitation of the music of other nations, at any rate as far as the execution is concerned. The Greek rite allows of no kind of instrument in the church. The singers of the Imperial Chapel never sing any other music than that of the church services, and they have consequently acquired an extraordinary facility for singing unaccompanied with a justness of intonation of which one can have no idea. But what gives their performances the sense of peculiar strangeness is the character of the bass voices, which extend from low A (three lines beneath the bass stave) to middle C, and produce an incredible effect by doubling the ordinary basses at the interval of an octave below them. . . These living double basses never cease to be singers singing in chorus; their voices, if heard separately, would be intolerably heavy; when they are heard in the mass the effect is admirable. The first time I heard this splendid chapel choir I was stirred with such emotion as I had never felt before. From the very first bars of the piece I began to shed tears; then, when the music quickened up and the thundering voices



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launched the whole artillery of their lungs, I found myself trembling and covered with a cold sweat. The most tremendous orchestra in the world could never give rise to this curious sensation, which was entirely different from any that I had supposed it possible for music to convey. The tenor voices are far from being as perfect as the bass, but are nevertheless very satisfactory. The sopranos are vigorous, and there are some pretty children's voices amongst the soloists. . . In short, the Imperial Chapel is a unique institution."<sup>1</sup>

Adam does not in the least exaggerate when he describes the impression produced by these singers, for Berlioz, who also had an opportunity of hearing them at St. Petersburg, writes of them as follows: "Since the ritual of the Greek branch of the Christian religion forbids the use in church of musical instruments, or even of the organ, the Russian Church choirs always sing unaccompanied. The singers of the Imperial choir wished to avoid having a conductor to beat time for them, and have managed to dispense with one.

"Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess of Leuchtenberg, having one day at St. Petersburg honoured me with an invitation to hear a mass sung specially for my benefit in

<sup>1</sup> *France musicale*, July 1840.

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the chapel of the palace, I was able to appreciate the astonishing assurance with which the singers, when thus left to themselves, pass suddenly from one key to another, or from a slow movement to a quick, and to admire the imperturbable *ensemble* with which they sing even the recitatives and the unbarred music for the psalms. The twenty-four singers, clothed in rich vestments, were arranged in two equal groups, which stood on either side of the altar facing each other. The basses occupied the places farthest from the centre, before them were the tenors, and in front of these came the boys—the trebles and altos. They remained perfectly motionless and silent with their eyes on the ground, waiting for the moment to begin singing ; then, at the signal, which was taken, no doubt, from one of the leaders (though it was impossible to detect that anyone gave them the note or indicated the pace), they intoned one of the biggest of Bortniansky's motets for eight voices. Out of the web of harmonies formed by the incredibly intricate interlacing of the parts rose sighs and vague murmurs such as one sometimes hears in dreams. From time to time came sounds so intense that they resembled human cries which tortured the mind with the weight of sudden oppression and almost made the heart stop beating. Then the whole thing

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quieted down, diminishing with divinely slow gradations to a mere breath, as though a choir of angels were leaving the earth and gradually losing itself in the uttermost heights of heaven. It was a piece of good fortune that the Grand Duchess did not speak to me that day, for, in the state I was left in at the end of the ceremony, I should probably have appeared to her highly ridiculous.”<sup>1</sup>

One of those who had most to do with the perfecting of this chapel choir was the celebrated composer Dmitri Spenovich Bortniansky, who was born in 1751 at Gloukov, in the department of Tchernigov, and died on September 28 (October 9), 1825. It would, however, be unjust not to mention before him another very remarkable musician, Maxim Sozontovich Berezovsky, who was a few years his senior, and, like him, was one of the fathers of Russian church music. Born in the Ukraine about 1745, Berezovsky was at an early age admitted to the Imperial Chapel, where his beautiful voice and his gift for composition attracted the notice of the Empress Catherine II, who had him sent, at her expense, to Italy to finish the musical studies he had begun at the ecclesiastical academy at Kiev. In this way he went to Bologna, where he resided several years, and acquired, under the

<sup>1</sup> *Les Soirées de l'Orchestre*, No. 21.



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admirable tuition of the famous Padre Martini, a great facility in writing. On his return to Russia he produced a considerable number of compositions for the Church, which were distinguished by feeling and formal elegance, and busied himself with reforms which he considered essential to introduce in the singing of Græco-Russian Church music. We are told, however, that his efforts in this direction were met by countless obstacles, and that he was bitterly disappointed in consequence. It may have been this disappointment which drove him to commit suicide in 1777, when he was barely thirty-two years old. One cannot be sure of this. What one can say with certainty is that Berezovsky is nowadays considered one of the greatest composers of sacred music his country has produced.

In discussing the vocal music of the Græco-Russian Church, one ought not, I think, to pass over in silence the name of St. John of Damascus, a well-known member of a religious order who lived during the seventh and eighth centuries, and was looked upon as the reformer and systematiser of this music. It is to him that we owe a large number of the hymns and tunes used in the church service, and his memory is on this account held sacred in Russia. Fétis speaks of him as follows : “ The lives of the saints of the Greek Church, and the majority



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of the writers of antiquity who have dealt with the services and vocal music of that Church, attribute to St. John of Damascus the restoration of the vocal music and the composition of numerous hymns and psalms which are still in use. He undoubtedly based his work on the *Typikon* (the oldest book of Rules for the Office, the original of which was in existence in his day in the monastery of Saint Sabbas), and from it he took the *Canons*, the *Troparia* or anthems, strophes, responses, and hymns, and the *Stichera* or canticles, for which he composed some of the tunes. The numerous manuscripts extant in the libraries of Europe and the monasteries of the East prove that he is indeed the author of the majority of these tunes. . . .”

As to Bortniansky, he is, properly speaking, one of the glories of Russian music, and in his way one of the most original of Russian musicians. He, too, was a member of the chapel choir, his lovely treble voice having gained him admission to it when he was barely seven years old. The Empress Elizabeth noticed him and handed him over to the Italian composer Galuppi (who was then Master of the Imperial Music at St. Petersburg) to look after his musical education. Galuppi having left Russia in 1768, the Empress Catherine II was unwilling that the studies of the young

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musician should remain unfinished, and sent him to rejoin his master at Venice. Bortniansky stayed some time in this town, and then, on the advice of Galuppi himself, went to study at Bologna, Rome, and Naples. During his lengthy sojourn in Italy, which lasted as long as eleven years, he began to write a considerable number of compositions in the Italian form and style, which included church music, sonatas for the harpsichord, and various miscellaneous pieces.<sup>1</sup> In 1779 Bortniansky returned to Russia, where he was soon appointed director of the choir, which received the title of "The Imperial Chapel" only in 1796. He continued to keep his post until his death—that is to say, for very nearly half a century; and it was during this time that he acquired the reputation which is rightly attached to his name. "In everything that he had produced up till his return to Russia," says Fétis, "he was inspired by the Italian music of his day; it was only at St. Petersburg that his genius was revealed in its essential originality. The choir which he was summoned to direct had been organised during the reign of the Tsar Alexis Mikhaïlovich, but although it had been in existence for some

<sup>1</sup> He even had an opera, *Quinto Fabio*, staged at Modena, December 26, 1778. (See *Cronisteria dei Teatri di Modena*, by Alessandro Gandini; Modena, 1873, 3 vols., 16<sup>mo</sup>.) This fact has never been noticed before.

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time, the quality of the singers' voices and the finish of their technique left much to be desired. Bortniansky sent for singers from the Ukraine and various provinces of the empire, choosing the best voices, and gradually training them until they acquired a perfection of execution which had not been dreamed of before his time. Thanks to this admirable artist, the Russian Imperial Chapel reached the degree of excellence which all foreign musicians admire so much to-day. It was for this incomparable choir that he composed settings in four and eight parts of forty-five complete psalms, which are marked by strong character and striking originality. He was also the author of a Greek mass in three parts and numerous miscellaneous pieces."<sup>1</sup> This account may be supplemented by what Octave Fouque says of Bortniansky in his interesting notice of Glinka. "Amongst his works is to be found, besides a mass and some psalms, a suite of pieces called *Songs of the Seraphim*, which, with their glowing serenity and their clear and tranquil grandeur, are really worthy of their title. On October 11, 1901, St. Petersburg celebrated with pomp the 150th anniversary of this fine musician, whom his fellow-countrymen have christened the Russian Palestrina."

Such is the great musician to whom the Im-

<sup>1</sup> Fétis: *Biographie universelle des Musiciens*.



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perial Chapel owes its reorganisation, its development, and that perfection in performance which is unrivalled in any other country ; such the composer who by his works has carried Russian church music to its highest pitch of splendour. The successor of Bortniansky in the Imperial Chapel was Theodore Lvov, a very distinguished dilettante and the father of General Alexis Lvov, who succeeded his father in the post. Alexis was a violinist of exceptional virtuosity, and a noteworthy composer of church music as well as of several operas, but he is chiefly famous for being the author of the Russian National Anthem, which is so justly popular to-day. Later on I shall have something more to say of this interesting musician. Theodore's name was omitted by Fétis in his *Biographie universelle des Musiciens*, and also by me in the supplement which I wrote for that work. I do not think that, as a matter of fact, he is mentioned in any biographical dictionary published outside Russia. This able amateur, who died December 14, 1836, wrote a preface for the second edition of Pratch's famous collection of Russian folk-songs, in which he very rightly brings out the indisputable affinities between Russian folk-music and Greek music.

I should like to draw attention to one other musician, who lived at the same time as Bort-

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niansky and seems to me to deserve mention. I mean the composer Degtiarev, who was born at Borysov in 1766 and died in 1813. At the age of six he showed so much disposition for music, and had such an attractive voice, that Count Sheremetiev, whose serf he was, became interested in him, admitted him to his choir, and eventually sent him to study at the University of Moscow. There he went on working at music till he left for St. Petersburg, where he became a pupil of Sarti. Some writers have felt justified in asserting that he travelled in Italy with Sarti. But if Degtiarev did actually go to Italy, it was certainly not in company with his master, for Sarti never saw his own country again after he had once settled down in Russia. From St. Petersburg Degtiarev returned to his native town, was placed by Count Sheremetiev at the head of the chapel which he had joined as a child, and thenceforward wrote a large amount of interesting church music for it. One of the most important and remarkable of his works is a big secular oratorio called *The Deliverance of Russia in 1612*, which is said to have been translated into Italian and performed in several countries.

## CHAPTER II

Russian dilettantism in the eighteenth century. Royal patrons of music.—Italian and French opera at St. Petersburg.—The first timid attempts at opera in the Russian tongue.

OUR musical life in France began more than two centuries ago. The real foundation of our opera goes back to the year 1671. *Les Troqueurs*, the work which is rightly considered the first typical manifestation of the art of *opéra-comique*, was performed at the old Opéra-Comique de la Foire in 1753, and from that time onwards we have seen an uninterrupted succession both of strong and of attractive composers, who have held high the banner of national music, and have never let it drop. It must be admitted, however, that it is only for the last hundred years—that is to say, since the creation of the Conservatoire in 1794—that we have possessed a school of music in the real sense of the word: by which I mean, a group of musicians united by the same ideals, moving towards the same goal, professing the same principles, and giving musical proof of a very real and accentuated nationalism—proof, in



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other words, if not of the understanding of music, at least of a quite special manifestation of it. It will be sufficient to recall in this connection the names of Berton, Lesueur, Méhul, Boieldieu, Catel, Nicolo, Herold, Auber, Adam, Halévy, &c. This amounts to saying that our music is entirely French, as far as style, colour, and character are concerned, and that it resembles neither German music nor Italian.

These two schools also had their own character sharply marked and defined, their own kind of originality, and what one might call their autonomy. The great and powerful German school, full of vitality and poetry, devoted itself mainly to symphonic music and the oratorio; the exquisitely delicate school of Italy, making up with its enchanting airs and graces for what it lacked in depth, was occupied more especially with the theatre, though by no means neglecting music for the Church. Up till modern times, then, there were these three flourishing and quite distinct musical schools—the German, the Italian, and the French, the French being the youngest and the last to arrive on the scene.

Things have altered nowadays. The German school since the death of Weber, Mendelssohn, and Schumann has disappeared, leaving behind it nothing but a colossus, whose genius is as uneven as it is powerful—I mean, the com-



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poser of *Lohengrin* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and he too is now dead. Besides, it would be a truism to insist that a single musician, however great his worth, cannot by himself alone represent a school. Well, who are the successors of Richard Wagner? . . . For my part, I do not know. I only see, scattered throughout Germany, some three or four more or less distinguished musicians: Carl Goldmark, Richard Strauss, Humperdinck, who are surely powerless to renew the exploits of their predecessors. Their very names grow strangely pale at the recollection of those giants: J. S. Bach, Handel, Haydn, Gluck, Mozart, and Beethoven.

Now look at Italy, famous for its long roll of glorious composers: Palestrina, Scarlatti, Pergolesi, Porpora, Piccini, Sarti, Anfossi, Guglielmi, Paisiello, Cimarosa. The Italian school surrendered its last breath with the music of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti.

In Italy, too, a strong and brilliant genius, with a steady fount of inspiration, was found in the composer of those moving works: *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, and the *Requiem* Mass. But it was precisely because he was a genius that his presence alone was sufficient to show up the feebleness of all that was going on around him. In point of fact, Verdi remains a glorious exception in the country of Palestrina, just as Wagner re-

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mains a glorious exception in the country of our old friend Bach. Do not misunderstand me : I do not assert that there are no more composers in Germany and Italy ; I only say that for the moment at any rate, there is not, strictly speaking, any school.

France alone remained in the breach, and when I say this I hope I may be acquitted of giving way to a fit of artistic chauvinism. It seems to me that it is not chauvinism but simple justice to recall the names of those distinguished and glorious composers : Gounod, Berlioz, David, Thomas, Bizet, Delibes, Lalo, Guiraud, Poise, Saint-Saëns, Massenet, Reyer, whose works have for the most part been familiar to the world for more than half a century. France, then, alone maintained a school of music whose labours really bore fruit ; when, far away at the other end of Europe, a little cloud suddenly appeared on the horizon of that vast Russian Empire, which is the last child born to the world of art. It was a cloud of young musicians of actively vigorous temperament, prodigious fecundity, and strikingly individual expression, who claimed their place at the banquet of the nations, and took it without more ado, having proved from the very first that they were worthy, and that none had greater rights to it than they. This was the Russian school, which suddenly asserted itself,

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without hesitating or groping its way, and in less than twenty-five years was spreading over the whole of Europe and doing prodigies of valour.

Nevertheless, this was obviously not a case of spontaneous generation. In art, more than anything else, incubation takes time. But the Russians started with a considerable advantage. They were able to profit by the labours of their predecessors in Germany, Italy, and France, and to appropriate without preliminary efforts a technique which lay ready for them to use but had taken others whole centuries to develop. In this way they were spared that long, slow, experimental period that always precedes the formation of art that is healthy and matured. On the other hand, as they had lived for a long time by themselves in retreat, and had not been mixed in the great intellectual movement which has gone on stirring Europe ever since the Renaissance, they worked in silence and reserved themselves, as it were, for the day when they should at last feel sure and confident of the forces they had been secretly accumulating. Then they burst forth and appeared before the world not only with the prestige of surprise, but with the advantage of having, with comparative ease, gained experience which had cost their predecessors endless toil and trouble. If one



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remembers the striking originality and the individual taste which they showed in handling an art to which they contributed a new and unexpected note; and if one thinks of the very great facility in their work which intelligent and persevering study had enabled them to acquire, there will be no difficulty in understanding the success with which they were greeted the moment they gave serious evidence of their gifts.

Besides which, the Russians have a very deep and natural love of music. The proof lies in their vocal music and in those highly coloured folk-songs of which I have had occasion to speak. These illustrate the Russians' innate talent for original composition, at any rate in this branch of music. With the advance of their civilisation this talent of theirs was bound to be shown on a higher and more completely artistic plane. All it needed was encouragement, even if it were indirect. This it obtained; music during the last century and a half having been cultivated and protected by all the sovereigns who have succeeded to the throne of Russia. The Empress Anne, the Empress Elizabeth, the Empress Catherine, and the Tsars Paul I and Alexander I, to mention no others, did all they possibly could to spread a taste for music, and also the practice of it, throughout their realm. To this end they

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summoned the most celebrated composers from abroad, including Galuppi, Martini (Lo Spagnuolo), Paisiello, Sarti, Cimarosa, Boildieu, and Steibelt, to direct the opera, to conduct the choir of the Chapel, and to organise the Privy Music of the sovereign. They also attracted, by the offer of high salaries, the greatest singers and the most famous virtuosi in the world. In this way they stimulated the love of music in a nation which was naturally gifted in this respect; and at the same time they made musical education easy, and provided the material means that were necessary for securing performances. This they did so successfully that, after a century of effort, Russian music came triumphant out of the bonds of infancy, and the country was startled by the sudden appearance of a work which is looked upon as a masterpiece. I refer to Glinka's famous opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, the first splendid indication that Russian national music was emancipated.

The history of Russian musical culture in its early, amateur days is pretty well known if taken as a whole, but its details are still exceedingly obscure, at any rate for us foreigners. Russia began her musical education with Italian opera, for which French opera was eventually substituted. It was, in fact, owing to the example set by foreign composers that



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Russian musicians after some attempts (which were timid rather than numerous) took stock of themselves, and were able, a hundred years later, to launch boldly out into music as a career and to give proofs of their abilities. Documents referring to this period are, however, rare, and precise information is difficult to obtain, more especially for anyone not acquainted with the language. Even Russian works published in Russia are, I fancy, somewhat incomplete in the material they embrace. Some of those which are not specially concerned with music are little more than repertories of works of all sorts which were given in the theatres of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Here is a list of some of them : an anonymous *Dramatic Dictionary*, published in 1787, republished in 1881 ; *The Foundation of the Russian Theatre*, by A. Karabanov, 1819 ; *Annals of the Russian Theatre*, by P. Arapov, 1861 (this is a repertory which goes down to the year 1825) ; *Chronicles of the Theatre in St. Petersburg*, by A. Wolff, 1877, 2 vols. (this is a continuation of the preceding work, and stops at the end of the reign of the Emperor Nicolas) ; *A Historical Glance at the Russian Opera*, by V. Morkov, 1862 ; *The Russian Theatre at St. Petersburg and at Moscow, 1749-74*, by M. Longuinov, 1873 ; *A History of the Opera seen through its best Interpreters*, by M. K., 1874 ;

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*A Glance at the History of Music in Russia from the point of view of Culture and Manners*, by Vladimir Mikhnevitch, St. Petersburg, 1879; to which should be added a work published in French by César Cui : *La Musique en Russie* (Paris, Fischbacher, 1881), a work referring especially to the period of his contemporaries (and having in this respect some of the attractiveness of a pamphlet), but also containing some valuable information as to the past. I shall return to this later.—We shall have to be content, then, with an almost superficial survey of the chapter dealing with the early history of music written for the theatre in Russia.

The first organised body of musicians seems to have been formed at St. Petersburg in the time of Peter the Great, and with the help of Duke Charles-Ulrich of Holstein-Gottorp, his future son-in-law. This was a small concert orchestra, comprising a harpsichord, a few violins, a viol d'amore, a tenor viol, a violoncello, a double bass, two flutes, two oboes, two horns, two trumpets, and kettle-drums. They played instrumental works by various German and Italian composers: Telemann, Keiser, Heinichen, Schulz, Fuchs, Corelli, Tartini, Porpora, and so on. All the executants were German. The Empress Catherine continued these traditions, but it is not until we come to the Empress Ann Ivanovna that

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we find the first attempt to give Italian opera at St. Petersburg. This princess sent one of her musicians to Italy to recruit and bring back an operatic company, which arrived in Russia in 1735 with the Neapolitan composer Francesco Araja at its head. He was engaged as organist of the Imperial Chapel, and lived to carry out the duties attached to the post for nearly thirty years. The company comprised, amongst other musicians, the following : Pietro Morigi (soprano), Filippo Giorgi and Cricchi (tenors), Girolamo Bon and Mmes. Pastorla-Piantanida, Catarina Giorgi, and Rosina Bon. Several instrumental virtuosi, including the violinists Piantanida and Domenico Dall' Oglgio, the violoncellist Giuseppe Dall' Oglgio (Domenico's brother), and others, were brought with these singers from Italy. Antonio Peres Notti, a scenic artist, accompanied them ; also Gibelli, a machinist, Fusano, a ballet-master, and some dancers, male and female, including Fusano's wife, Giulia.

*Abiatare*, the first Italian opera written by Araja for St. Petersburg, was staged in 1737, during the festivities given to celebrate the Empress's birthday. It was sung by Morigi, Giorgi, Cricchi, Mlle. Massari, and Mme. Giorgi, and was a great success. As early as January of the following year Araja produced a second work, *Semiramide* (with the principal



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part taken by Mme. Piantanida), which was equally successful. He followed it up with several others in succession, amongst them being *Scipione*, *Arsace*, *Seleuco*, *Bellerofonte*, and *Alessandro nell' Indie*.

Italian opera continued to enjoy a success during the twenty years since Araja had been in control of it, when Elizabeth Petrovna, who had mounted the throne, conceived the plan in 1755, of creating a Russian opera. It was difficult to carry out at the moment, but in spite of obstacles means were eventually found of getting together a company of Russian singers (some of whom were of very inferior quality), and Araja was given instructions to set to music for them a Russian libretto, *Cephalus and Procris*, with which he had been provided by the poet Soumarakov. The work was given during the Lent carnival, and was sung by Gavriilo Martsenkovich, Nicolas Klutarev, Stepan Rashevsky, Stepan Eustatiev, and Mlle. Beligradsky, who was the daughter of a celebrated lute-player, and was barely fourteen years old. This was the first attempt at opera written and sung in Russian. Whatever the result, the preliminary effort had been made, and although there was little in the nature of a success for a long time, at any rate the foundations of Russian opera had been laid. Italian opera undoubtedly took the

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first place on all occasions, but Russian opera followed modestly behind, and even though the Russian company was required to produce works the music of which had mostly been written by Italians, and was also frequently engaged to sing Italian operas merely translated into Russian, yet the creation of a Russian operatic company was in itself a fact of very great significance.

Araja, after having written another Russian opera on the occasion of Prince Peter Feodorovich's marriage, returned to his own country in 1759, laden with honours and riches by the Empress. He was succeeded by a German musician, Hermann Friedrich Raupach, who in the same year put on a Russian opera, *Alcestis*, and in the year following an Italian opera entitled *Siroe*. Meanwhile Araja was summoned back to Russia in 1761 to write a fresh work; but the murder of Tsar Peter III alarmed him so much that he hurried off again at once to Italy. Thereupon, a fellow-countryman of his, the composer Manfredini, was made director of the Italian Opera, for which he wrote the music of several ballets and of a certain number of operas, amongst them being *L'Olympiade* (1762), on Metastasio's well-known poem, and *Carlo Magno* (1764).

The reign of the Empress Catherine II was a brilliant epoch for music in Russia. She



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collected round her several foreign composers, who, simultaneously or successively, had a number of works staged which they had written expressly for the Italian opera. First of all there was Galuppi, who only remained a short time, but scored a great success with his *Didone abbandonata* (1766), and also produced his *Re pastore* (1767) and *Ifigenia in Tauride* (1768). Then came Traetta with *L'Isola disabitata* (1769), a new *Olimpiade* (1770), and *Antigone* (1772). Traetta was succeeded by the celebrated Paisiello, who remained longer than the others, staying almost ten years in Russia between 1776 and 1785. Besides writing several cantatas and other things of less importance, Paisiello composed for the Court of St. Petersburg ten operas, which rank amongst the best of his works: *La Serva padrone*, *Il Matrimonio inaspettato*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *I Filosofi imaginari*, *La Finta Amante* (written for the meeting of the Empress Catherine and the Emperor Joseph II at Mohilov), *Il Mondo della Luna*, *Niteti*, *Lucinda ed Armidoro*, *Alcide al bivio*, and *Achille in Sciro*. All these works of Paisiello roused the keenest enthusiasm amongst Russian lovers of music, and put the crown on his career.

If what Fétis says is correct, Paisiello probably felt to a certain extent the influence of the Russian national character. We may also

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suppose, on the other hand, that Russian musicians may have taken advantage of the style of his compositions. This is what Fétis says when discussing *Il Re Teodoro*, the Opera Buffa which Paisiello wrote and had staged in Vienna, where he had stopped on his way home from Russia to Italy: "At the very moment when this fine, imaginative work was conceived, the rumour got about at Rome that Paisiello was showing traces of the influence of the cold North. The source of this rumour is to be found in the scores of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *I Filosofi immaginari*, and *Il Mondo della Luna*, which, when they were transplanted to Italy, did not seem to be characterised by the charm that is to be found in the composer's earlier works. Affected as he had been by the Northern taste for something more robust than a series of airs, which was all that the Italians cared for, he had increased the amount of concerted music in his scores, and had inserted a number of structural devices and technical effects, the value of which was not by any means appreciated by his fellow-countrymen."

Paisiello had hardly left St. Petersburg when Sarti, Cherubini's master, was summoned to take up the duties of director of the Imperial Chapel. Sarti began by writing a Psalm and a *Te Deum*, with Russian text, and then had an Italian opera entitled *Armida e Rinaldo* pro-

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duced in 1786. He subsequently composed a Russian opera, *The Glory of the North*. About the same time he was instructed by the Empress Catherine to organise a Conservatoire at Katerinoslav, modelled on the Conservatoires in Italy. The sovereign was so pleased with the pupils of this school, when they gave a concert before her in 1795, that she raised Sarti to the rank of a noble, and presented him with a considerable amount of landed property in order to keep him definitely fixed in Russia. During Sarti's long stay in St. Petersburg, Martini, the composer of *La Cosa rara*, was invited to take over the direction of the Italian opera, and wrote for it an Opera Buffa, *Gli Sposi in contrasto*. After him came Cimarosa—Cimarosa the magician, one might call him—who was summoned to St. Petersburg in his capacity of composer, and produced three strikingly successful operas—*Cleopatra*, *La Vergine del Sole*, and *Atene edificata*. He is also said to have written, within the space of three years, as many as five hundred (!) different pieces for use at Court and for members of the nobility.

Russian society was very much addicted to Italian performances, even in the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, who, according to the legend, mercilessly imposed a fine of fifty roubles on any of her guests who were unable to take part in a Court entertainment. Under



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the Empress Catherine II this taste developed into a kind of frenzy. Indeed, it is quite easy to understand how, with the composers I have mentioned and the operas which they produced, the means of getting the works performed should have been gradually improved, until they had reached a high standard of perfection. Well-known singers and famous virtuosi, such as Marchesi, Bruni, Millico, Puttini, Saletti, la Todi, la Pozzi, la Gabrielli, and many others, had been attracted by high salaries to St. Petersburg to interpret these works ; particular care had been taken in recruiting the orchestra and choruses ; technical study had little by little acquired more importance, and the *ensemble* had at all points become commensurate with the efforts required of each one individually. Now, what was gained from the point of view of technique by the Italian opera was naturally gained to a like extent by the Russian. Besides which, the public was being educated, the taste for music was gradually spreading, and the progress of music as an art imperceptibly began to be felt.

In addition to all this, the Empress Catherine, for all her love of Italian opera, did not neglect or forget the Russian. She even went so far as to encourage the efforts which were beginning to be made tentatively in that direction by writing herself the texts of five operas

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in Russian. The music of one of these operas called *Fedoul*<sup>1</sup> was written by a Russian composer, Fomin, who was the author of several other works, *The Merchants' Court*, *The Fortune Teller*, *Annette*, *The Paladin*, *Good-Man Kozametovich*, and, above all, *The Miller*, an *opéra-comique*, which was given on January 20, 1779, and made his name extremely popular. Mention must be made of a few other Russian composers who had operas produced about the same time as Fomin, namely: Matinsky, Boulan, then a little later, Volkov, Alabiev, and the brothers Titov. These operas were, however, mere preliminary attempts, which were still somewhat timid, and up to a point must be regarded as exceptional. The time was not yet ripe, and indeed many years had to elapse before the world was to see a really national music spring into being and flourish in the sun.

In 1803, when the Tsar Alexander I was on the throne, Italian opera was supplanted at St. Petersburg by French opera. Boildieu, who had been summoned to Russia by the Emperor, spent eight years there, during which time he produced nine operas, which were specially written for the Court, and had a great success. These were : *Aline, reine de Golconde*, *Amour et*

<sup>1</sup> This opera was revived at Moscow in 1896, after more than a hundred years, at the commemoration of the centenary of the death of the famous Empress.



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*mystère, Abderkan, Un Tour de soubrette, La jeune Femme colère, Télémaque, Les Voitures versées, La Dame invisible, and Rien de trop.* This does not include the fresh choruses for Racine's *Athalie*, which he followed the example of so many others in setting to music. Boildieu returned to France in 1811 and was succeeded by Steibelt, who wrote two French operas, *Cendrillon* and *Sargines*.

During all this time Russian opera, but for certain exceptions which I have mentioned, was still almost entirely in the hands of foreigners. Numerous Russian works were written by Italian composers, such as Soliva the elder, Sapienza, and above all, Catterino Cavos, who has often erroneously been taken for a Russian, because, although by birth and origin a Venetian, he spent forty-two years of his life in Russia. This composer was born at Venice in 1775, and as a child was almost an infant prodigy, for at the age of twelve he wrote a cantata in honour of Leopold II, Emperor of Austria, and when fourteen years old was organist at the Church of St. Mark. He settled down in Russia in 1798, and died at St. Petersburg on April 28, 1840, after having held an exceptionally important musical post in that town.

Although a foreigner, Cavos has claims of his own to be mentioned in a history of Russian

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music. Having been appointed to the post of musical director and conductor of the Imperial theatres in St. Petersburg, he wrote sixteen operas for them, as well as six ballets and the incidental music for as many plays. It is rather remarkable that the subject of one of his operas, *Ivan Sousanin*, was precisely the same as that of Glinka's opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, which forms the real point of departure of Russian national music, and is the first and most striking manifestation of its character. The following are the titles of most of his other works: *The Ruins of Babylon*, *The Phœnix*, *Elija's Power*, *The Invisible Prince*, *The Twelve Hours' Reign*, *The Stranger*, *Love's Coach*, *Fresh Trouble*, *The Cossack Poet*, *The Three Hunchbacks*, *The Daughter of the Danube*, *The Fugitive*. All these works are written to a Russian text. Cavos also wrote a French opera, *The Three Sultanas*. César Cui, who, as a critic, can hardly be called indulgent, appraises the part Cavos played in musical history in the following terms: "His operas are couched in a broader style than those of his predecessors, and are richer both in melody and in instrumentation; they show an obvious intention to assimilate Russian characteristics, but they are nevertheless fundamentally Italian. Several of Cavos's operas were very successful, and remained in the repertory for some years at the beginning

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of the nineteenth century, but nowadays they are forgotten."

We are coming to the moment when the dawn of real Russian opera—a national opera born on Russian soil—is to glow upon the horizon. We are about to see the strong and striking personality of Glinka rise before us and boldly proclaim the existence of a fresh, vigorous, and profoundly original art in two superb compositions.

But before speaking of Glinka, we must devote a few words to the attempts (one can hardly call them efforts) of an estimable composer, who was lucky enough to have talent, but had not enjoyed the advantages of a sufficiently lengthy and solid musical education to be able to show it to advantage, and to make the fullest use of it. The composer we mean is Verstovsky, who wrote several operas, of which one at least (namely: *Askold's Tomb*, which appeared in 1835) became really popular, and won him a reputation which might almost be called brilliant. But although Verstovsky was decidedly gifted as far as his actual ideas were concerned, and wrote graceful, elegant melodies, he had not sufficient sureness of hand to turn his tunes to as much account as might have been done by a skilled musician. He was unable to develop an idea, or to build up a piece, or to combine voices and



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instruments in such a way as to obtain the effects essentially required by dramatic music. He was, in fact, a distinguished amateur rather than a musician in the real sense of the word. Nevertheless, his *Askold's Tomb* enjoyed popularity for a long time, and I am not sure that it is not even now occasionally given. Amongst his other operas were *The Quarantine*, *The Importunate Man*, *Stanislas*, *The Old Sorceress*, *Grandmama's Parrots*, *The Shepherdess*, and *Gromotoï*. He was born in 1799; he held the post of Inspector of Theatres in Moscow, and died in November 1862.

César Cui writes of Verstovsky as follows : “ His operas might better be called vaudevilles. And so, in spite of his gifts as a writer of melodies, and in spite of the popularity which many of them (more especially those in his opera *Askold's Tomb*) attained, Verstovsky cannot be regarded as one of the founders of Russian opera. His music undoubtedly has a certain Russian character about it, but at the same time it is far from being what we mean by operatic music. It contains no trace of the rich contrasts, the dramatic outbursts, and the orchestral colouring which we to-day consider necessary : all of which qualities demand not merely a supple, vigorous talent, but also profound knowledge of technique.”



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At last we have arrived at Glinka and *A Life for the Tsar*, which was going to revolutionise musical Russia, or make a place for it, if one may put it that way, at the concert of the nations of Europe.

## CHAPTER III

A national composer : Michael Glinka, the real founder of Russian opera.—His life and works.—*A Life for the Tsar*, a patriotic opera.—*Rousslan and Ludmilla*.—Glinka's claim to fame.

MICHAEL IVANOVICH GLINKA, who, even after the lapse of half a century, is still regarded as Russia's greatest composer—in fact, as Russia's composer *par excellence*—belonged to a noble family of wealthy landed proprietors who lived in the village of Novospasskoï (in the government of Smolensk), which belonged to his father, a retired army captain. He was born in this village on May 20 (June 1), 1804, and died in Berlin, when he was still young, on February 3 (15), 1857. At an early age he showed very strong tastes and an unusual aptitude for music, which his family did not attempt to oppose. He was endowed with a somewhat mystical temperament, and in his Memoirs he tells how, as a child, he was filled with poetic enthusiasm by the services in the church at Novospasskoï on great occasions, and how he was enchanted more especially

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by the sound of bells. To such an extent was this the case, that he used to spend hours at a time imitating their peculiar resonance by beating with all his might on copper bowls. These Memoirs, written by Glinka in Russian, were published after his death by his sister, Mme. Shestakov, who devoted herself to his memory with the enthusiasm of a real disciple. They first of all appeared in one of the important reviews at St. Petersburg, and then a very limited edition was printed off separately. Souvorin, the publisher, brought out a complete edition in 1896, which also included Glinka's correspondence.

While still a child he found a more substantial way of satisfying his appetite for music than by means of these makeshift bells. One of his French biographers, Octave Fouque, tells the story :—

“ About this time Glinka's father was somewhat embarrassed financially, so that the display of luxury which habitually characterised the daily life of the great landed proprietors in Russia was not in evidence at Novospasskoï. But Madame Glinka had a brother who was better off, and who counted amongst his other privileges that of being able to keep up a private orchestra. When the Glinka's entertained, they used to ask their relation to send them some instrumentalists, who either played

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dance music for the company or else gave a regular concert. One evening the musicians played a quartet by Crusel for clarinet, violin, viola, and violoncello. Little Michael, who was then ten years old, was extraordinarily struck by hearing them. For two days he could think of nothing else. He was wrapt up entirely in his memories of this poetical combination of instruments, living in a kind of ecstatic dream, and only giving the vaguest attention to his lessons. His drawing-master noticed his abstraction and reproved his pupil for his passion for music, which he had ended by guessing. 'What can you expect?' the boy replied; 'my whole soul is in music!'

"His uncle's orchestra was the means of giving the youthful Glinka the keenest pleasure. At supper time an Octet would be heard, playing original Russian tunes, the instruments consisting of two flutes, two clarinets, two horns, and two bassoons. The softly veiled, sonorous harmonies, and the very melancholy of the tunes themselves, induced an intensely poetical mood. In a few years, when Glinka had become a man and was about to take up musical composition as a career, he was to recall these national airs in which his childhood had been gently cradled. He wished to become, and he was to become, the founder



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of a new school having its roots deeply embedded in Russian soil.”<sup>1</sup>

Glinka was thirteen years of age when his father placed him in a school at St. Petersburg, which was connected with a Teaching Institute recently founded for the children of the nobility. He made good progress with his studies, more particularly in the matter of languages, acquiring a knowledge of Latin, French, German, English, and Persian, with the natural facility for foreign tongues which Russians possess. But these studies did not prevent him from practising the art which he cherished above everything else. He worked hard at the pianoforte and violin, and especially the pianoforte, for which he had lessons from John Field and Carl Mayer. Later on he studied harmony under Dehn in Berlin. We shall see to what a degree his love of music was carried, and how intelligently he fostered it. He was barely twenty when, finding himself somewhat out of sorts, he departed on a journey to the Caucasus, to take the waters. His health was in fact precarious, and he was an invalid all his life. As soon as the cure was completed he returned to his father's house at Novospasskoï. He tells us in his Memoirs what his musical occupations were at this time :—

“ The over-intensity of the nervous stimulus

<sup>1</sup> Octave Fouque : *Michel Ivanovitch Glinka*.

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produced by the action of the sulphurous waters, combined with the multitude of new impressions crowding on my brain, set fire to my imagination. I took up the study of music again with renewed enthusiasm. Twice a week we were at home to our friends, and the orchestra was engaged to play. I got up these entertainments in the following way. First of all, I made all the players, with the exception of the most efficient, rehearse their parts separately, until there was not a single fault or doubt about any note. This enabled me to make a very thorough study of the great master's methods of orchestration. Then, with my violin in my hand, I conducted, myself, and noted the general effect of the performance. When it went well, I used to step back several paces and hear how it sounded at a distance. These are the principle pieces which formed the repertory. To take the overtures first, we had: *Médée*, *L'Hotellerie portugaise*, *Lodoïska*, *Faniska*, *Les Deux Journées* by Cherubini (the first two being my favourites); *Joseph*, *Le Trésor supposé*, *L'Irato*, by Méhul; *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart; *Léonore* (the one in E major) by Beethoven; then for symphonies we had Mozart's in G minor, Haydn's in B flat, and Beethoven's in D major. Rossini's overtures were not yet being played."

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This practical way of studying instrumentation was ingenious, one has to admit, and it must have borne good fruits. At the same time Glinka made his first attempts at composition by writing a few pianoforte pieces and songs.

He had hardly finished studying when he entered the Civil Service, and obtained a post in the Department of the Minister of Ways and Communications. But he only kept it for a short time. As he received a pittance from his family, he regained his liberty and began to live only for and by music. In spite of his natural timidity—one might almost say his natural savagery—he now began to go about into society and to associate with a set of rich, clever, and artistic young men, which included Prince Galitsin, Count Vielhorsky, the brothers Tolstoy, and others. He seized every opportunity of playing or composing, he organised and conducted musical entertainments on a large scale, and he appeared himself as a singer and actor in operatic performances : in short, he gave himself up to a kind of frenzied dilettantism.

Prince Nicholas Galitsin, to whom Beethoven dedicated his twelfth, thirteenth, and fifteenth string quartets, was a great lover of music, and a well-known violoncellist, and had a general reputation as a musician. His son was Prince George Galitsin, who was exiled



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(the story goes) on account of his advanced political opinions, and travelled through Germany, England, and France; giving concerts on all sides, which he conducted himself, and in which he endeavoured to popularise Russian music, more particularly Glinka's and his own. Finding himself in Paris in 1861, he attended some of the first of the Popular Concerts founded by Padeloup, and had a share in their success, and when, in 1865, he was allowed to return to Russia, he took them as a model for the concerts of classical music which he organised at Moscow in the hall of the Riding School, where you could obtain seats for twenty kopeks.<sup>1</sup> Prince George Galitsin was known as a composer of two Masses, two Fantasia's for orchestra, numerous songs and dances, two books of Method for Singers, and so forth. He died on September 1872.

Count Michael Yourievich Vielhorsky, who was born on October 31, 1787, and died on September 9, 1856, was also a remarkable amateur musician, and was a pupil of Kiese-wetter, who formed a friendship with Beethoven. He was the heart and soul of the amateur concerts of St. Petersburg, and he and his brother, Count Matthew Vielhorsky, an exceptionally talented violoncellist, also

<sup>1</sup> About sevenpence.



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conducted concerts of sacred music. He was fairly prolific as a composer, writing, amongst other things, a symphony, a string quartet, unaccompanied choral works, some songs (which are still popular), and an opera, *The Gipsies*, after the poem by Poushkin, which he was prevented by death from finishing.

To return to Glinka, another interesting passage in his Memoirs will show us what he was doing at this time, and what an amount of energy he had :—

“Towards the end of August, 1829,” he says, “the idea occurred to Galitsin, Tolstoy, some other young men, and myself, of giving a public serenade on the water. We hired a couple of boats, which we illuminated with Venetian lanterns ; the organisers of the *fête* embarked in one, the trumpeters of the regiment of the Household Cavalry in the other. On the prow of the first boat was a pianoforte, with the help of which I accompanied and conducted the singers. I remember the admirable effect in the songs made by Tolstoy’s tenor voice. The chorus from Boildieu’s *Dame blanche*, ‘Sonnez, sonnez,’ went particularly well. After each song a flourish of trumpets sounded from the second boat. Trumpets with keys and valves had not been invented by then, and the ear had not to endure the harsh discordant sounds with

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which it is harassed nowadays. A mazurka by Count Michael Yourievich Vielhorsky, written specially for trumpets, made a very strong impression on me. In later years I wrote the *Slavsia*<sup>1</sup> in *A Life for the Tsar*, with the old-fashioned trumpets in my mind, and if an orchestra could be formed similar in constitution to the one which took part in our serenades, I am convinced that the *finale* would have a far finer effect.

“Our serenade was mentioned in the newspaper *L'Abeille du Nord*, which encouraged us to make further efforts. We soon gave a performance to Prince Kotchoubey, president of the Imperial Council. There were sixteen of us youngsters, our company including Bashoutsky, Sterich, and Protassov, and we had an orchestra, with Mayer at the pianoforte. Dressed up as a woman, I played the part of Donna Anna in a translation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; then I improvised at the keyboard.

“We gave another performance at the palace of Tsarkoe-Selo. A serenade of mine was sung, and also some couplets with chorus which I had composed to verses by Galitsin. Ivanov sang the couplets; the choruses were entrusted to the singers of the Imperial Chapel, to which Ivanov himself belonged.

“From there we went to the house of

<sup>1</sup> Song of Glory.

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Princess Stroganov at Marino, in the government of Great Novgorod, at a distance of nearly two hundred miles from St. Petersburg. There I played Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. . .”

But this life of simple musical enjoyment could not last for long. Glinka felt it himself, and considered that he ought to work more seriously. He thereupon proposed to travel in Italy in order to get into touch with musical movements in that country. His father was at first opposed to this plan, but he eventually gave his consent. So, in the spring of 1830, or, to be precise, on April 25, Glinka set out, in company with his friend Ivanov, to take the waters in Germany, and from there to cross over into Italy.

Ivanov was the Russian singer who made such a reputation in Italy as an Italian singer, and became the friend of Rossini. He made his first appearance at Paris in 1833, and the *Revue Musicale* for October 5, 1833, contained the following notice of that event: “The Emperor of Russia has a Chapel Choir composed entirely of bass voices. One of the young men in it, having attracted attention by his exceptional musical gifts, was sent at the sovereign’s expense to Naples, in order to perfect his singing. He actually settled down to work, was coached by a celebrated singer,



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and made rapid progress. But everything he saw and heard gave him so pronounced a taste for Italian methods that he resolved never to return to his own country in the North. The directors of the Théâtre-Italien, who were passing through Naples, heard him sing, engaged him, and took him back with them to Paris. This bass singer of the Russian Imperial Chapel is now the tenor Ivanov, whose pure, fresh voice made such a sensation on Tuesday in the Théâtre-Italien." It need scarcely be remarked that Ivanov never had a bass voice, and that he was a tenor all his life. But what is noteworthy is that the Tsar Nicholas was apparently very vexed at the singer not returning to Russia when his leave of absence had expired. Ivanov, moreover, never went back there, and when he had come to the end of his career as a singer, he retired quietly to Bologna, where he died on July 7, 1880. He was born at Poltava in 1809.

Glinka and Ivanov, then, arrived at Milan, where Glinka remained a year and took lessons from Basili, the Director of the Conservatoire in the town. He frequented the theatres, he was present at the first performance of Bellini's *Sonnambula*, he made musical friends, and he even composed and published some pianoforte pieces, which were merely arrangements and fantasias on themes by Rossini,



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Donizetti, and Bellini. After this he went to spend several months at Naples, then he returned to Milan, and finally he left in 1832 for Berlin. It is rather interesting to note that the idea which was to lead him to fame—the idea of writing “Russian music”—first occurred to him while he was living in Italy. He tells us so in his *Memoirs*: “As to my attempts at composition at this time, I look upon them as having been somewhat unfortunate. I was able to take a sensible enough view of my work in this direction, but everything which I wrote to please my friends at Milan, and which Giovanni Ricordi most obligingly published, merely served to prove to me that I had not yet found my direction, and that I should never succeed in writing in the Italian style with any conviction. *Home-sickness led me little by little to write Russian music.*” From this day forward he was never to abandon the idea.

At Berlin Glinka for several months had lessons from Dehn, an excellent theorist, who was keeper of the musical section of the Royal Library, and a contributor to the *Leipziger Musikalische Zeitung*. He learnt from him how to write fugues and development sections, which did not prevent him from composing a few pieces and from thinking perpetually of his plan of creating a Russian musical style.

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This, in his own words, "haunted his mind." One can see how it did from a fragment of a letter addressed at this period to one of his friends in St. Petersburg :—

"I shall not be here for any length of time. I am longing for the moment to come when I can shake you by the hand. I have a plan in my head—an idea. . . It isn't perhaps the moment for making a clean breast of it. Perhaps, I may be afraid, if I say what it is, of seeing incredulity stamped on your face. . . Shall I tell you everything? . . Well, I have a notion that I too might be able to give our stage a work on a large scale. It is not going to be a masterpiece—I am the first to admit that—but on the whole it won't be so bad! What do you say to that? The essential is to make a good choice of subject. In any case, it will be thoroughly Russian. *Not only the subject, but the music too, is to be Russian: I want my beloved fellow-countrymen to feel thoroughly at home when they hear it,* and I don't want foreigners to take me for a braggart who has presumed to deck himself out, like the jay, in someone else's finery. I begin to realise that I may lose you by unduly prolonging a description of something which still lies in the womb of the future. Who knows, too, whether I shall find I have sufficient strength and ability to carry out what I have vowed to do? . ."

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He did find both strength and ability enough, and above all he found, when he returned to his country, a number of keen young spirits, prepared to understand him and help him, and ready to push him along in the direction he wanted to take. Indeed, when he had once returned to St. Petersburg, where he took up his quarters from that time forward, he soon found himself in the society of men of letters, poets, and musicians, whose intellectual preoccupations afforded several points of contact with his own ideas. There were Poushkin, Gogol, Koukolnik, Pletnev, Joukovsky, and others too. They used to meet at the house of Joukovsky, who, in his position of tutor to the Tsarevich (who afterwards became Alexander II), resided in the Winter Palace. "There," says Glinka's biographer, "literary problems were warmly discussed, and the breath of a Renaissance began to stir—a Renaissance which was to imbue the theatre and the novel with the characteristic traits that marked the manners, the beliefs, and the traditions of Russia. Glinka had a share in the working up of a national poetry and, amongst all these men of talent who were animated with the same ideals as his own, he ventured to speak of his ambition to found a Russian opera. It is easy to imagine the eagerness with which Glinka was greeted.



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The circle of New poets was filled with enthusiasm for this talented, vigorous, young musician, who had resolved to shake off the yoke of the foreigner, in order that he too might consecrate an altar to his country.”<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that Glinka used the words : “ It is essential to make a good choice of subject.” To write music with a national character, a national subject was required. Joukovsky suggested that of *Ivan Sousanin*, which recalls one of the darkest and most dramatic episodes in the history of the struggle between Russia and Poland, at a time when Poland was all-powerful. Glinka at once realised what he might make of this fine story. The epoch was 1613. The Poles, after the death of the Tsar Boris Godounov, had invaded the Russian Empire and had advanced as far as Moscow. The whole Russian nation, seeing the danger it ran of losing its independence, rallied round the young Michael Federovich Romanov, who had just been elected Tsar. The Poles, so the story runs, had laid a plot to carry off the person of the youthful sovereign, and some of their leaders, being ignorant of his whereabouts, turned to a peasant, Ivan Sousanin, and concealing their identity, ordered him to take them into the presence of his master. Ivan suspected

<sup>1</sup> Octave Fouque : *Michel Ivanovitch Glinka*.



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treachery, and bravely sacrificed his own life to save his sovereign and his country. He pretended to be ready to obey, and having meanwhile sent his adopted son Vanya to warn the Tsar of the danger threatening him, he drew off the Poles into the depths of an almost impenetrable forest, from which they were unable to find any way out. Then, when the enemy discovered that they had been tricked, the unhappy Ivan was put to death, falling an obscure but heroic victim of his devotion.

Glinka was struck by the grandeur and pathos of this story, and above all by the opportunities for local national colour which it would provide on the stage. He also rapidly calculated what he could do with it from the musical point of view. He drew up with his own hand a sketch of the plot, and when he had reduced it to order, he asked Baron Rozen to write the libretto for him. The baron was secretary to the Tsarevich and, although German was his native tongue, he readily consented to collaborate. It is quite easy to see how such a subject, when it was skilfully prepared for the stage and supplemented by characteristic incidents (such as the brilliant scene in the Polish camp which makes the second act, and the splendidly dignified conclusion showing the solemn entry of the

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Tsar into his capital), was just such a one as to heighten the inspiration of the composer and to rouse the enthusiasm of a public for which, as everyone knows, patriotism is not a mere word. Besides, the strong interest of the dramatic action, the intrinsic value of the music, the splendid and original staging, the entirely new style of the work regarded as a whole—all this combined to bring about a huge triumph for *A Life for the Tsar* (as the opera was eventually called), when it was put on for the first time in the Imperial Theatre of St. Petersburg on November 27 (December 9), 1836. The cast included the famous singer Petrov (Sousanin); Mlle. Vorobieva (Vanya), who was subsequently replaced by Mme. Petrovna; Mme. Stepanova (Antonida); and the French tenor Charpentier (Sabinin).

In spite of the astonishment and the hostility of a few, who were bewildered by the new style of the work, *A Life for the Tsar* was extraordinarily successful from the beginning, and it became a really national event. Not that the work is entirely revolutionary in character or completely original. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat composite, which is not astonishing, when one remembers, on the one hand, that it is Glinka's first production for the stage (and for a first work it

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shows amazing sureness of hand), and, on the other, that it was written after his return from his long tour in Italy, in the heyday of Bellini and Donizetti's popularity, and at a time when the vogue of Rossini, both in Italy and in every other country, was at its height. It is not surprising, then, that traces of Italian phraseology, which is precisely what Glinka wished to avoid, are to be found—in spite of the composer, as it were—on more than one page of the very closely packed score of *A Life for the Tsar*. This is more specially the case in the trio of the first act, which, incidentally, is very attractive; the principle phrase, which is announced by the tenor, being taken up first by the soprano and then by the bass. Undeniable Italian influence is also to be found in the concerted quartet in the third act, which is enchantingly beautiful and is constructed on splendidly broad lines.

But the essential originality underlying both the thought and the phraseology comes out in other parts of the score, where one can enjoy the very individual flavour of Glinka's style. It is to be found, for instance, in the pretty, graceful chorus for female voices with which the first act opens; in the vigorous and passionate duet in the third act between Sousanin and Vanya; in Sousanin's first scene with the Poles, which glows with really dramatic



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imagination ; in a charming chorus of young girls, in five time, which ends strangely on the dominant ; and, above all, in the admirable scene of the forest, which is the real climax of the opera. In this scene, Sousanin, with a presentiment that he will be put to death by the Poles whom he has tricked, recalls his past, and dreams of the beloved beings whom he is voluntarily leaving in sacrificing his life for king and country. The whole of this long monologue (an unspeakably sad piece of melodic writing) is exceedingly beautiful and moving, and strikes a note of true inspiration. Indeed, it is animated with a nobility of thought and an intensity of emotion such as could only spring from the soul of a great musician. This magnificent episode leaves a deep and poignant impression, and it is just here that the music becomes strikingly fresh and individual in character, introducing new and unforeseen rhythms, in both five and seven time, which, like some of the harmonies, take the listener by surprise and fall on the ear with a curious yet powerful effect. A case in point occurs in the epilogue where the Tsar makes his entry into Moscow—a scene conceived with a breadth and splendour that are really epic.

Mention must also be made of the occasional use of Russian folk-songs, which are skilfully



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introduced and ably treated, and give a quite peculiar colour and stamp to the whole work. This device, which was of Glinka's own invention, has constantly been resorted to by subsequent composers. It is one of the things which gives modern Russian music its character and individuality, and helps to differentiate it from the music of other schools. In short, if the score of *A Life for the Tsar* is not perhaps an actual masterpiece, we must admit that, taken as a whole, with the tendencies it shows, the style which it partially establishes and the actual intrinsic value of the music, it has to rank as a work of the very first order. Here, moreover, is the opinion of one of Glinka's compatriots, César Cui, on the subject; it is to be found in his book, *La Musique en Russie* :—

“The music of *A Life for the Tsar* is entirely imbued with the national feeling of Russia and Poland. In the whole opera there is hardly a single phrase which has more affinity with the music of Western Europe than with that of the Slavs. The only completely parallel case of strong national traits, treated on the highest possible artistic plane, is to be found, in my opinion, in *Der Freischütz*. Glinka, however, only availed himself of a very limited number of folk-tunes to indicate the essentially Russian character of his music: so fertile a

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writer of tunes, as he was, had no need to look for his ideas anywhere beyond himself. His own tunes, like the harmonies which he puts to them, are strongly stamped with the Russian character. The Polish local colour is reproduced less faithfully and by more objective and superficial means. Glinka obtains it by the use of the strongly marked rhythms of the polonaise and the mazurka, which are heard as soon as the Poles appear on the scene. The method is easy and showy, and may satisfy a not very exacting listener, but it is not sufficient in the dramatic episodes. One may quite well be a Pole without constantly humming mazurkas and polonaises. . .

“ In this work, where inspiration and technical skill go closely hand in hand, Glinka has created a completely equipped Russian school of opera. *A Life for the Tsar* was born in full armour, like Minerva, and its author from the very first moment found a place amongst the greatest composers. Can a musician set out on his career more brilliantly than this ? If Meyerbeer had been really introduced to the public by *Robert le diable*, the entry to his career could not have made more effect than Glinka's. In fact, are there many operas in which, the exigencies of dramatic action and local colour being strictly observed, one can count as many as five-and-twenty first-rate

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numbers, and (to set against them) only four or five that could be called poor? The contrary is only too often the case: that even the most famous composers can maintain their reputation if their score contains two or three successful numbers, even though the rest of it is full of commonplaces."

It may also, perhaps, be interesting to quote Glinka's own impressions when his work first appeared before the public, and to illustrate the nervous state of mind he was naturally in on so momentous an occasion. He tells the story in his Memoirs in the following words:—

"It is impossible to describe my sensations on that evening, especially at the beginning of the performance. My wife and I occupied a box on the second tier, all those on the first having been reserved for the principal State functionaries and for the families of the Court. The first act went well, the trio being vigorously applauded. The whole of the second act, in which the Poles are on the stage, was played in profound silence. I had counted on the polonaise and the mazurka, which had been highly appreciated when they were read over by the orchestra, and I was heart-broken to see how coldly they were received. I went behind the scenes, where Cavo's son, to whom I told my impressions, said to me: 'How can you expect Russians to applaud Poles?'



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This remark only partially reassured me, and I remained a prey to the keenest anxiety. But the entry of Mlle. Vorobieva cleared away all my doubts. The song of the orphan boy, the duet between him and Ivan, and the scene in G major went off admirably.

“ In the fourth act, the chorus representing the Poles fell upon Petrov with so much goodwill that his shirt was torn and he had to defend himself in earnest. As to the epilogue ; the grandeur of the spectacle, the view of the Kremlin, the crowd of actors, the massing of the groups, the animation of the stage, filled me with admiration. Mlle. Vorobieva was admirable in the trio with chorus, as she was, in fact, from beginning to end in her part.”

The success of *A Life for the Tsar* was striking and indisputable. However, like all works which are in radical contrast with the humdrum taste of the public, it did not fail to stir up unfavourable criticism when it made its appearance. The fact is stated by Russian writers themselves. M. Platon de Waxel wrote as follows on the subject :—

“ *A Life for the Tsar* has suffered the same fate as every other work which marks a rapid movement in advance and opens up fresh horizons : it has not been understood and accepted all at once. The greater number of objections were directed precisely against what



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constitutes the chief merit of the work—its profound originality combined with its respect for the traditional forms of opera. Some called it ‘wretched, vulgar stuff’; others found fault with it for not having broken away entirely from the traditions of Western music, as though there could be two kinds of musical grammar and two methods of estimating the æsthetic value of musical proportion and form. One thing cannot be gainsaid, and that is, that while confining himself within the limits of these traditions, Glinka has succeeded in giving his music a pre-eminently Russian stamp, and has managed to take his inspiration from folk-songs and the spirit which they breathe, without actually quoting the tunes or descending from the level of the highest planes of his art. The transplanting of national tendencies into the sphere of music, which Glinka was one of the first to accomplish, is one of the triumphs of our century.”

In any case, whatever the critics may have said, the public made no mistake about it. In a very short while *A Life for the Tsar* went on its brilliant and glorious career, acclaimed and winning victories on all sides. To such an extent was this the case, that on December 5 (17), 1879, the 500th performance was given at St. Petersburg, and seven years later, on November 27 (December 7), 1886,

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the opera celebrated its fiftieth birthday with its 577th performance. For this occasion the work was specially remounted, the scenery was entirely new, and even the least important characters were taken by singers of the first rank, like M. Stravinsky, who played the small part of the chief of the Polish legion, and M. Mikhaïlov, who agreed to undertake the solo in the introductory chorus. The four principal parts—Ivan Sousanin, Sabinin, Vanya, and Antonida—were in the hands of Mm. Koriakin and Vassiliev and Mmes. Lavrovsky and Pavlovsky. The performance was a kind of solemn national festival, and it had its counterpart in the provinces, where *A Life for the Tsar* was given in every Russian town which possessed an opera-house. At Moscow it was even played simultaneously in two theatres. Finally, mention must be made of two occasional publications : an interesting *History of 'A Life for the Tsar,'* by P. Weimarn, who subsequently wrote a biography of Glinka (published in 1892), and a very vivid pamphlet by Vladimir Stassov, which contains portraits of Glinka and his sister, Mme. Ludmilla Shestakov, whose name is closely bound up with his reputation, and also an illustration of the statue of the composer at Smolensk.

A year before the publication of the pamph-

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let, the town of Smolensk, close to his native village, had put up this statue to Glinka. Its erection was mainly due to the energy of that fine character, Mme. Shestakov, who did everything she could, after his death, to perpetuate his name. With the help of a devoted friend, M. von Engelhardt, she undertook a complete edition of his works, including the full score of the two operas, and saw it through the press. For the erection of the statue, she had the sympathetic and active assistance of Prince George Obolensky, a Marshal belonging to the nobility of Smolensk; and she was also helped by several of the gentry of the same province, as well as by Anton Rubinstein, who contributed, out of his own purse, a portion of the sum required for the completion of this interesting and, what might really be called, national undertaking. To raise the funds, Rubinstein gave a concert which brought in 5000 roubles.<sup>1</sup>

*A Life for the Tsar* has been given in German at Hanover under Hans von Bülow, in Czech at Prague under Balakirev, in Italian at Milan and London, and finally in French: first at Nice and then at Paris at the Nouveau Théâtre on October 19, 1896, though here, unfortunately, the musical conditions were deplorably bad.

Just after *A Life for the Tsar* had made its

<sup>1</sup> £530.



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appearance, Glinka was appointed Choral Director of the Imperial Chapel (not organist, as it has been erroneously stated). Theodor Lvov, the organist of the Chapel, died on December 14, 1836, and his son, Alexis Lvov, the future composer of the Russian national anthem, succeeded to his post. His appointment and Glinka's date from January 1 and 2, 1837. Acting in his new capacity, Glinka soon had to undertake a journey to Finland and Little Russia, to look for singers for the Chapel Choir, the membership of which was being reorganised. This did not prevent him from thinking of a new work and from getting to work on it fairly quickly. Acting on the advice of Prince Shakovsky, a popular dramatic author of that time, he took as his subject one of the early poems of Poushkin, *Rousslan and Ludmilla*, and begged the great writer himself to prepare him a libretto on the basis of his poem. Poushkin promised to do so, when his tragic death suddenly put an end to the project.

Poushkin, it may be remembered, was mortally wounded by a pistol shot in a duel at the age of thirty-seven. He had married a young woman who was as famous for her beauty as he was for his brains. Unfortunately he was not only jealous but, owing to the African blood which he had in his veins, he was subject to very violent fits of temper. He was mis-



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guided enough to listen to an infamous story which insinuated that unwelcome attentions had been paid to his wife by her own brother-in-law, Baron Georges d'Anthès, a young French officer, serving as lieutenant in the Empress's body-guard, and brought up as the adopted son of Baron de Heckeren, the Ambassador of the Netherlands in St. Petersburg, who subsequently became a senator of the French Empire. Poushkin sent the Baron d'Anthès so insulting a letter that the inevitable outcome was a duel, and a very serious one. The pistol was the weapon decided upon, and the duel the kind in which the adversaries choose their own time to fire. M. d'Anthès was the first to shoot, and his bullet wounded Poushkin mortally, without killing him on the spot. When he rushed anxiously towards the wounded poet, the latter, grossly reviling him to his face, shouted to him to stop ; it was his turn to fire, and he intended to make use of his right to do so. M. d'Anthès went back to his place, and Poushkin, who was lying exhausted on the ground and losing his blood, slowly aimed and fired. With cruel joy he saw his adversary fall and thought he had killed him. M. d'Anthès was, however, only wounded. As to Poushkin, he suffered horrible pain for four days and then expired, after having at least the consolation of knowing

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that those whom he had believed guilty were undoubtedly innocent. Baron d'Anthès was court-martialled and condemned to be degraded from the ranks as well as deprived of the right to hold a title. This sentence received the approbation of the Emperor, but in view of the fact that he was not a Russian subject (having been born in France, and having only taken refuge in Russia after being compromised in the case of the Duchesse de Berry when she was arrested at Nantes), he was conducted by an officer to the frontier, and after having had his commission taken from him, was expelled from Russian soil. Baron d'Anthès of Heckeren survived some sixty years after these events had taken place, dying in November 1895.

Poushkin, then, being dead, Glinka had to set about some other method for obtaining a libretto from *Rousslan and Ludmilla*, which is just a fairy-story, by itself rather commonplace, but converted by Poushkin's literary skill and brilliant imagination into a tiny miracle of grace and delicacy. So he asked one of his friends, Bakhtourin, to draw up a sketch of the opera on the lines he wanted, which Bakhtourin proceeded to do (so we are told in the Memoirs), in the space of a quarter of an hour. But the sketch, as one may readily imagine, was not entirely satisfactory,

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and Glinka remodelled some parts of it himself and then had the text written by two other friends, Nestor Koukolnik, the dramatist, and Michael Guedeonov, a brother of the director of the Imperial theatres of St. Petersburg. These two authors introduced into the text a considerable number of Poushkin's actual lines. But this was not all : an officer, Captain Shirkov by name, wrote a portion of the first act and the words of Gorislava's air; and finally, a school-fellow of Glinka, N. Markovich, supplied the verses of Finn's ballad. It was almost inevitable that the result of so many collaborators working independently of each other should be somewhat hybrid and wanting in cohesion. Indeed, the libretto of *Rousslan* has for the most part been pretty severely criticised, and César Cui shows himself indulgent when he appraises it in the following terms :—

“ This libretto has its defects and its weak sides. There is nothing dramatic in it, and there is no interest in the action, which consists merely of a succession of scenes of which one might very well invert the order, and even diminish or add to the number, without affecting the course of the story. Anyone who demands that the subject-matter of an opera should be interesting and dramatic will find this one beneath all



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criticism. On the other hand, if we look at it from another point of view, we shall find that there is plenty of variety in it, and that each scene, taken by itself, seems to invite musical treatment. Glinka could not have done better than to hit on a poem so much in keeping with his own peculiar talent, which was very pliable and well adapted for the treatment of descriptive scenes. We have seen that Glinka was dramatic almost in his own despite, owing to his being gifted with mental vigour and spontaneity, and that he was, above all, a musician, looking on opera as an opportunity for writing good music of as varied a kind as possible. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that he should have been content to accept the text of *Rousslan*, which, with its strange mixture of varicoloured scenes, reminds one of a sort of conjuror's kaleidoscope, and that he should even have put some of the very best of himself into it. Indeed, while Poushkin has given his poem an air of moral freedom and irresponsibility, Glinka, on the other hand, has taken his task seriously, and has treated it throughout with the deepest feeling."

In the opinion of the great majority of Russian critics and musicians, the score of *Rousslan* is superior as a whole to that of *A Life for the Tsar*. In the matter of colour, moreover, it is very different. Whereas in the earlier work



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Glinka contrasted and opposed the Russian and the Polish nationality, in *Rousslan* he aimed at brilliant Oriental effects, and made two of the characters—Prince Ratmir and Chernomor, the magician—stand out strongly in this respect. It goes without saying, of course, that Russian characteristics play a large part in the course of the work, as one may see by looking at the first and fifth acts, which are animated, vigorous, and highly coloured. Here, too, Glinka utilised some of the essential features of folk-song. The theme, for instance, of Ratmir's splendid recitative in the third act, and the two dance tunes in the *lezghinka* in the fourth, are of Tartar origin; the theme of Finn's ballad is that of a genuine Finnish folk-song; and the exquisite chorus of "Harmonious Flowers" is based on a Persian air. It was on his travels in Finland, when he was driving one day with some friends to visit the Falls of Imatra, that Glinka heard a postilion singing the song, which he took down and made into a haunting ballad. The theme of the chorus of "Harmonious Flowers" was given him by the Secretary of the Persian Embassy at St. Petersburg.

These folk-songs are handled with great skill, and the development of the themes is strikingly rich and individual: so much so, in fact, that in this case the composer's treat-

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ment of his material is superior to the material itself. Besides, Glinka has taken care to draw types and to differentiate all the characters by a musical style and phraseology suited to each. "Ratmir, the Oriental prince, is given amorous, *cantabile* melodies; the old sorcerer (a Finn, like all sorcerers in Russian legends) has a ballad, the theme of which was picked up during an excursion to the shores of the Baltic; Chernomor, the Caliban of the Black Sea, is designated by a strange effect of orchestration which exactly depicts his dense brain and heavy, stupid, clumsy way of thinking. Some scenes—the first, for instance, and the last—have very strongly marked Russian features. To the two sympathetic characters, Rousslan and Ludmilla, Glinka has allotted a number of beautiful, broadly designed melodies, which are developed freely and without leanings towards the methods of any particular school."<sup>1</sup> Finally, the rich and exuberant melodic invention, the original and varied orchestration, the fresh, piquant harmonies which sometimes borrow a strange colouring from certain Oriental scales, all contribute to make the score of *Rousslan and Ludmilla* a work of genius of the first rank.

César Cui writes of it: "We were merely interpreters of the language of Truth when we

<sup>1</sup> Octave Fouque: *Michel Ivanovitch Glinka*.

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spoke of the high value of *A Life for the Tsar*. It would be equally truthful of us to assert that the music of *Rousslan* has even greater worth. *A Life for the Tsar* is a work of youth as well as of genius; *Rousslan* is the product of a mature talent that has reached the final stages of its development. Regarded as absolute music, *Rousslan* is a work of the first rank; from this point of view it will bear comparison with the great operatic masterpieces. In it Glinka has marked out new paths and opened up horizons undreamed of before his time.”<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding, when the opera first appeared on November 27 (December 10), 1842, it did not win the success it deserved. It was too new in style, and too complex to be grasped and appreciated by the public at the very first. I think, however, that the coldness of its reception has been somewhat exaggerated. For if the first performance did, undoubtedly, not pass off very well, owing to a tiresome but accidental circumstance—namely, the indisposition of a popular singer who had an important part and the substitution at the last moment of a feeble one in her place—it is nevertheless a fact that *Rousslan* was given on as many as thirty-two occasions during the first season; which is not what I should

<sup>1</sup> *La Musique en Russie.*



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call being received with cold water. The work was very much discussed, it is true, and some of the criticisms were unfair. But between that and a complete failure there is a vast deal of difference. On this very point, moreover, I have come across, in an article in the *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg*, some interesting details, the veracity of which can hardly be impugned :—

“ If one is to believe M. Youry Arnold (in his Memoirs) the work was badly played at the opening performances. Cavos, the Chapel organist, had died two years before, and had been replaced by Charles Albrecht, a pedantic German conductor, who, like his orchestra, took exceptions to some discourteous remarks which were published by Bulgarin in his paper, *L'Abeille du Nord*, and were attributed to Glinka himself. Owing to the ill-humour of the players the rehearsals went badly, and it was only at the third performance that things began to go smoothly, though even then neither players nor singers (with the exception of the two Petrovs) could make head or tail of the style of the music.

“ Speaking generally, one may say that there was open opposition to the opera, even before the first performance, on the part of some very distinguished amateurs. Count Michael Vielhorsky, the famous patron of music and



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the author of songs that are still remembered, spoke continuously of what he called 'this failure of an opera,' and was more particularly contemptuous of the fifth act, in which Glinka allowed him to make numerous 'cuts.' Others were made both before and after the first night, and this helped to make the plot of the opera still more obscure.

"The accounts which have survived of this first night are not always in entire agreement with each other. Glinka in his Memoirs says that the first two acts did not make such a bad impression, and that it was only when the third act was reached that the public began to show that it was bored. The Count left the theatre during the fifth act, and at the fall of the curtain there were even some hisses, which came mostly from the stage and orchestra, mingled with calls for the author. M. Youry Arnold, on the other hand, declares that the signs of approval were numerous and sustained, and that, generally speaking, the work obtained something more than a mere courtesy success.

"What really did spoil the performance was the illness of Mme. Vorobieva-Petrova, the admirable contralto of the Russian opera-house, who was the original Vanya in *A Life for the Tsar*; for, at the last moment, she had to hand over her part to her namesake, Mme.

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Petrova, a beginner, who from that day was never heard of again. Much, too, was expected from the waltz in the third act which was to rouse the bulk of the public, but it was precisely this number which was less successful than any other. It was only at the third performance that the celebrated singer was able to appear, and immediately the whole of the Oriental scene in the third act made a great sensation ; so much so that, for seventeen performances running (three being given a week), both author and singer had to appear each time to acknowledge the applause.

“The work was played thirty-two times, right into Lent. This indicates that it was becoming more and more of a success ; indeed, it was even caricatured at the Russian Theatre. During the two following seasons it was put on for another twenty performances, and *Rousslan* only disappeared from the bills when the Russian opera itself was transferred to Moscow, on the arrival of the Italian troupe with Rubini at its head.”<sup>1</sup>

It is only right to say that it was not really until after Glinka's death that *Rousslan* was at last appreciated at its proper value. It saw the light again at St. Petersburg, at the Théâtre-Cirque in 1859, after being left on

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg*, November 27 (December 10), 1892.

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the shelf in silence for fifteen years, and its success only became decisive and indisputable after its revival in 1864 at the Théâtre-Marie. From that time onward it never disappeared from the repertory, and on November 27 (December 10), 1892, it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary (as *A Life for the Tsar* had done six years previously) with its 285th performance. Since then both the public and the critics have agreed in admiring it, almost without reserve.

“The beauties in the score of *Rousslan*,” writes one critic, “put it in the first rank of lyrical operas. An epic picture of Russia in old days is unfolded, more especially in the first act, with such sweeping breadth of outline and with such original treatment on the musical side, that one cannot find a parallel to it in any other opera in the general repertory. Even the big concerted numbers with chorus in *Guillaume Tell* and *Les Huguenots* merely deal with stirring historical episodes and not with the poetry, the manners, and beliefs of an entire epoch. Only the *finale* of the first act of *Don Giovanni* is as rich in musical ideas, as fine in style, and as complex in form, though it has not the epic character that one finds in the first act of *Rousslan and Ludmilla*.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg.*



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The great musicians of the time, Meyerbeer, Liszt, and Berlioz, testified to their admiration for Glinka. When he paid his first visit to Paris in 1844, with the purpose of making his music known there, he read in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale* for August 25 : “ M. Glinka, the most celebrated of Russian composers, and the author of several operas which have been given with brilliant success in St. Petersburg, has just arrived in Paris, where he means to spend the winter. We hope he will write and work for the Opéra Comique.” He found Berlioz there just when he was holding a series of orchestral and choral concerts in the Circus of the Champs-Élysées. Berlioz paid his Russian colleague the graceful compliment of putting several of his works into the programmes. Glinka himself gave a concert in the Salle Herz, and Berlioz, wishing to make it an opportunity of introducing him to his readers in the *Journal des Débats*, wrote him the following letter :—

MY DEAR SIR,—To perform your music and to *tell* numbers of people that it is fresh, alive, charming, vivacious, and original is not enough; I must give myself the pleasure of writing a few columns about it. I feel the necessity all the more as it is my duty to do so.

Have I not to keep the public in touch with



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whatever is most remarkable, in the way of music, going on in Paris ? Be good enough, then, to give me a few notes about yourself, your early studies, the musical institutions of Russia, and your compositions. By studying your score with your help (in order to obtain a less imperfect knowledge of it), I may be able to turn out something tolerable, and to give the readers of the *Débats* an approximate idea of the pre-eminent position you occupy.

I am fearfully bothered with these infernal concerts, the conceited airs the musicians give themselves, and so on ; but I shall certainly find time to write an article on a subject of this sort. It is not often that I have anything so interesting to write about.

H. BERLIOZ.

One may be allowed to add that it was not often that Berlioz made himself so agreeable. Anyhow, one cannot doubt his sincerity on this occasion, for he kept his word and published an extremely flattering article on his colleague in the *Journal des Débats* for April 16, 1845. He began by recounting how, years before, in 1831, he had met Glinka at Rome, and how at one of Horace Vernet's "at homes" (Vernet being then Director of the Académie de France) he had heard several Russian songs of his delightfully sung by

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Ivanov. "These songs," he said, "struck me very much by the character of their melodic outline, which was most attractive and quite different from anything I had ever heard before." He went on to speak of *A Life for the Tsar* and then of *Rousslan and Ludmilla*, and expressed his opinion of the composer's capacity in the following terms :—

"M. de Glinka has presented the Russian stage with a second opera, *Rousslan and Ludmilla*, the subject of which is taken from a poem by Poushkin. This work is fantastic in character and half Oriental, as though it had been written under the double inspiration of Hoffmann and the *Thousand and One Nights*. It is so different from *A Life for the Tsar* that it might almost be the work of another composer. The author's talent seems riper and more powerful. There can be no doubt that *Rousslan* is a step in advance, and marks a new phase in Glinka's musical development.

"In his first opera one feels, above all things, the influence of Italy coming through the tunes, which are stamped with a fresh, true, national colouring; in the second opera, on the other hand, with its important orchestral part, its beautiful harmonic web and its skilful scoring, one feels the predominating influence of Germany. Amongst the first musicians to do striking justice to the beauties

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of the new score must be mentioned Liszt and Henselt, who have transcribed and written variations on some of the most brilliant themes. Glinka's talent is essentially supple and varied. His style has the rare advantage of being able to adapt itself, at the desire of the composer, to the exigences and character of the subject treated. Glinka can be simple and even naïve without ever condescending to employ a vulgar phrase. His melodies take unexpected turns, and are built on periods which charm by their very strangeness. He is a great harmonist, and uses the instruments with a care and an acquaintance with their most intimate resources, which make his orchestra one of the most novel and vivacious modern orchestras that one can hear. The public appeared to be entirely of this opinion at the concert given by M. de Glinka in the Salle Herz last Thursday. The indisposition of Mme. Soloviev, a St. Petersburg singer who has taken the principal parts in the composer's operas, prevented us from hearing the vocal numbers announced in the programme; but his Scherzo in the form of a waltz and his Cracovienne were loudly applauded by a brilliant audience. . . The Scherzo quite carries you away; it is full of wayward rhythms which are extremely piquant; it is really new, and it is developed in an unusually able way. It is more especially



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the originality of the melodic style to which the Cracovienne and the March owe their success. This distinction is a rare one, and when a composer has, in addition, a distinguished harmonic style and the gift of beautifully free, clear, and coloured orchestration, he has an undoubted right to claim a place amongst the first-rate composers of his day. The author of *Rousslan* is one of those who has such a right."

Berlioz's opinion of Glinka is undoubtedly interesting and deserves to be quoted. The excellent account of Glinka's concert, given by Maurice Bourges in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale* for April 20, 1845, also makes interesting reading.

I will not expatiate any more on the last years of the composer's life, on his new journeys to France and Spain, or on his last compositions which, incidentally, were not written for the theatre. If I have already dwelt at such length on him, it is because the coming of Glinka marks a red-letter day in the history of Russian music, and is the point of departure of a new era ; it is because his name is a kind of symbol, and also because this admirable musician is rightly considered in his own country (and ought to be everywhere else) as the founder and creator of Russian opera. As such he has a right to



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claim special attention and a place of his own.

Yes, Glinka is certainly the head of a school and the pioneer of modern music in Russia. But his work was not all written for the stage, and it would be unfair to forget that, apart from the theatre, his compositions are numerous and varied. One may quite well have a poor opinion of the writings of his extreme youth—those which preceded his first return to Russia in 1834; we have seen that he held them fairly cheap himself. But from this moment onwards his compositions deserve serious attention. They include numerous songs with French or Russian words to the number of about eighty, many of which are exquisitely beautiful, being sometimes profoundly sentimental, sometimes almost sensual; also the music for Koukolnik's play, *Prince Kholmsky*, a Tarantella for orchestra, and *Karaminskaya*, an exquisite symphonic fragment, full of originality. Then there are the other symphonic works brought back from Spain, namely: the *Jota Aragonese* and the beautiful Spanish overture called *A Summer Night at Madrid*, as well as a few pianoforte and other miscellaneous pieces. Amongst these I will single out for mention a Polonaise with chorus; a Waltz and Polonaise (in E major) for orchestra; a Tarantella for orchestra

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with chorus and dances; a Solemn Polonaise, written expressly for the coronation of the Emperor Alexander II; a Hymn of the Cherubs; a Tarantella (in A minor) for pianoforte; and finally, some choruses for women's voices, written for the pupils of the convent of Smolna and the Catherine Institute.

It must be added that if *A Life for the Tsar* is largely, on account of its subject, Glinka's essentially popular opera, *Rousslan and Ludmilla* on the other hand remains, for many of Glinka's fellow-countrymen, the most complete, striking, and lofty manifestation of his noble genius. This beautiful work at last put an end to the doubts and the hard words it was subject to in its early days, and now it has taken its rightful place in the forefront of the repertory of Russian opera—a place which is due to its inherent brilliance and beauty and which no one would dream of disputing. It is above all in *Rousslan* that Glinka has escaped from the traditions of Western music, has displayed all his originality and power, and has completely expressed his own personality. *A Life for the Tsar* gave promise of a splendid season to come; *Rousslan and Ludmilla* is the ripe, luscious fruit itself.

It is always interesting to know the man in the musician; so I will borrow this character

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sketch of Glinka from his sister, Mme. Ludmilla Shestakov, who, when she published his Memoirs, completed them by adding a chapter, from which I quote the following lines :—

“My brother had an innocently childlike, tender, delicate, affectionate nature. He was certainly a little capricious, and was spoilt; he had to have everything his own way. Still, if he had his faults, he made haste to recognise them and redress them. He never forgot a good turn or a good action. Nothing disturbed his good nature: neither family disputes nor the conversations at the clubs where he happened to be. One cannot exactly say that he was unmethodical, but he was unable to conduct his own affairs; anything in the nature of household matters was particularly distasteful to him. His faults were excessive susceptibility and distrust. He dreaded death to such an extent that he took the most ridiculous precautions against it, and avoided everything, no matter how trivial, which he thought might possibly be harmful. The slightest indisposition terrified him, as though it were a disaster. He treated himself on homœopathic lines, and always kept in the house a small medicine chest containing the most necessary remedies. He followed Von Hahnemann’s principles in



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avoiding scents and smells, more especially camphor, which he looked upon as a poison. Spices and aromatic articles were banished from the table ; at least he imagined they were. As a matter of fact, the cook did not hesitate to use them in the dishes which she sent up for family consumption. One day Glinka found a leaf of bay in his soup. Putting it on to the edge of his plate he remarked : ‘ I dislike bay leaves, either on my head or in the soup.’ ”

We saw earlier in this chapter that Glinka died at Berlin, where he had resided about a year. In November 1900 homage was paid to his memory in that capital, and the Tsar Nicholas II took a suitable part in the affair, as a letter sent from Berlin to a Paris paper tells us : “ Thanks to the munificence of the Emperor Nicholas II, we have for several days possessed a Glinka Museum. The owner of the house in the Französischestrasse, in which the author of *A Life for the Tsar* lived in 1856 and died on February 13, 1857, had the property rebuilt, and the Emperor Nicholas II offered to present a fine monument in honour of Glinka to the splendid new house. The monument consists of a bust of the composer, flanked by two figures representing Rousslan and Ludmilla, the two heroes of Glinka’s famous second opera ; the whole thing being sur-



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mounted by the Russian Eagle, which produces a splendid effect by hovering over the group. Two memorial tablets, one in German, one in Russian, recall the life and death of the composer."

## CHAPTER IV

Two forerunners of the "Young Russian School" : Alexander Dargomijsky, Alexander Serov.

A "YOUNG RUSSIAN SCHOOL" exists, the members of which have very considerable talent ; they are not, however, distinguished by modesty, and they have been ready enough to confer on themselves the hall-mark of infallibility. This young school was initiated by Balakirev, César Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and Moussorgsky, all of whom are dead to-day, except César Cui, who became their literary champion, and undertook to spread their gospel and propagate their doctrines with his pen. The members of the Russian school have this much in common with the young Wagnerian school in France and Belgium, that they thoroughly despise everything which lies outside their own rigid principles, and have only the consolation of scorn to offer to anyone thinking or acting differently from themselves. We shall see with what patronising assumption of superiority César Cui speaks of fine and noble musicians like Rubinstein and Tchai-

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kovsky, who had the audacity or misfortune to compose on different principles from those which he advocated. It is true that Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky had their revenge by writing works which have more value and have acquired a greater reputation than those of César Cui, whose very real talent, however, I have no wish to dispute.

Later on I shall have to dwell more fully on this little brotherhood, which somewhat recalls that of the French Romantics of the thirties. With touching modesty it called itself "The Powerful Group"<sup>1</sup> (*Mogouchaya Koushka*), while in St. Petersburg it was named "The Coterie"—a coterie consisting of a sort of school of mutual admiration, outside which, so far as its members could see, was no salvation, and no art, in the real sense of the word :

"No one has sense, save we and our friends alone."

For the moment I have to deal with two musicians who seem, each in his own way, to have prepared the way for these somewhat presumptuous reformers, who, besides being reformers, were also iconoclasts : for they seemed determined to leave nothing standing that happened to have been produced or created before them. These two musicians, who were very unevenly gifted and unlike each other from the

<sup>1</sup> Or "The Invincible Band."

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point of view of capacity, are Dargomijsky and Alexander Serov.

Alexander Sergeivich Dargomijsky was born in a village in the government of Toula on February 2, 1813, and he died at St. Petersburg on January 17, 1868. Beginning his career by following to some extent in the paths of Glinka, he enjoyed the same advantages as that composer : he was born, that is to say, of a family of rich landed proprietors, and was lucky enough to meet with no opposition to his desires on the part of his relations, so that he was able to devote himself freely to cultivating the art he loved. Fétis, who knew him personally, has left us the following interesting information about his youth and childhood :—

“ Dargomijsky was five years old when he first began to speak ; up till then his parents believed that he would be a mute. . . From his infancy he showed a decided taste for art, more particularly for the stage. He made with his own hands tiny marionette theatres, for which he composed *vaudevilles* of a sort. At seven years old he was given a teacher of the pianoforte with whom he had incessant disputes, because he was more busy composing sonatinas and rondos than studying the mechanism of the instrument. A few years later he took up the violin, and learned to play on it sufficiently well to make a passable second in a



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string quartet. From this time he looked on music from a different angle, and began to understand its significance as an art. When he was between fifteen and sixteen he wrote several concerted duets for pianoforte and violin as well as some quartets. Soon afterwards, his parents realised what his true vocation was, and entrusted his musical education to Schoberlechner, a distinguished pianist and composer, who gave him his first notions of harmony and counterpoint. On reaching his eighteenth year in 1831, Dargomijsky became a Civil Servant by entering the Ministry of the Imperial Household, but he was not prevented by these duties from continuing to study music. When he was only twenty years old he had a reputation in social circles for his skill at the pianoforte. As he could read even the most difficult music at sight he was very much in demand as an accompanist by the best singers, both amateur and professional. While engaged in this occupation he acquired a knowledge of the voice, and turned with enthusiasm to vocal and dramatic music, for which he had to sacrifice his instrumental studies. It was at this time that he wrote an immense quantity of songs, cantatas, and concerted pieces, with accompaniment for pianoforte or for string quartet."

We can see from this what Dargomijsky's

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early youth was like. It might be summed up by saying that up till then he was little more than a distinguished amateur, though no doubt his aspirations led him higher. Soon, however, he made the acquaintance of Glinka, with whom he became friends. It may, indeed, have been due to this friendship that he thought of writing, like him, for the theatre. In order the better to follow his inclinations, and with a view to finishing his musical education, which he realised to be incomplete, he gave up his post in the Government office and devoted several years to the close study of theoretical treatises and to carefully reading the scores of the most famous composers. When he felt sure of himself he set to work to write an opera, choosing a particularly dramatic subject, namely: *Lucrecia Borgia*. But he had hardly begun his score when he abandoned the subject to turn to another poem by Victor Hugo, written expressly for the operatic stage: I refer to *Esmeralda*, which the illustrious author had based on his admirable story of "Notre-Dame de Paris."

It was in compliance with the wish of Mlle. Louise Bertin, who was the daughter of the editor of *Le Journal des Débats*, that Victor Hugo decided to write this libretto, though the task was somewhat distasteful. The work was given at the Opera House on November 14,

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1836, with Adolphe Nourrit, Levasseur, and Cornélie Falcon in the three principal parts. In spite of this splendid cast, the great name of Victor Hugo, and the immense power wielded at the time by *Le Journal des Débats*, *Esmeralda* was not a success, and Mlle. Bertin's music was voted very poor.

Dargomijsky set the French text to music, and when the score was finished had it translated into Russian. He then offered the work to the management of the imperial theatres. This was in 1839. He made persistent efforts to obtain a definite answer, but this was continually delayed, under one pretext or another, until as many as eight years had elapsed. Finally, on December 5, 1847, *Esmeralda* made its appearance at the theatre in Moscow, where its success was such that it was given four years later in the Alexandra Theatre in St. Petersburg. There was even a question of translating it and transferring it to the stage of the Italian Opera at the special request of the famous singer, Tamburini; but the management of the imperial theatres firmly refused permission, as it wished to uphold its previous decision to allow no more works by Russian composers to be produced in Italian.

Fétis, who had had an opportunity of reading the score three years before it was produced, wrote the following appreciation of it in a letter



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addressed to *La Gazette Musicale* in December 1844 :—

“I can give you information with regard to M. A. Dargomijsky, a young composer of noble family, who has done me the honour of paying me a visit on his way through Brussels, and is now in Paris. He is a distinguished pianist, and he has published in St. Petersburg a number of vocal and instrumental compositions which have been a brilliant success. But I have been more particularly interested, or perhaps I should say, I have been profoundly astonished at an opera which he has composed on a poem by M. Victor Hugo. What struck me about the score, on the merits of which M. Dargomijsky wished to have my opinion, was its originality, its energy of conception (which did not, however, mean absence of grace), its melodic style, its piquant harmonies and skilful modulations, and finally, the very remarkable instinct which it showed for combining voices and orchestra. If Russia’s musical education in the future can only be conducted by a few lovers of the art with as much real talent as this young noble possesses, I have no doubt that we shall soon see her music alive and flourishing, and bearing fruit independently of the help of others.”

As a matter of fact, *Esmeralda* is a youthful work of composite style, and is to a certain



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extent conceived on the model of the French operas of Meyerbeer and, above all, of those of Halévy, by whose genius Dargomijsky is said to have been strongly attracted. There is hardly a trace of originality in this first work of his ; certain pages of it, however, are very vivid and happily contrived, as for instance, the curious and picturesque episode of the procession of the *Pape des fous*. One may also notice the remarkable skill which Dargomijsky showed even at this time in his method of writing for the voices, though he was unfortunately not able, for all that Fétis may say, to apply it in writing for the orchestra. But I must repeat : this was only a youthful work, in which the personality of the composer had not had time to make itself felt.

Dargomijsky had barely finished his *Esmeralda* when he began to write a work on a smaller scale. This was *The Triumph of Bacchus*, a kind of cantata, the subject of which was taken from Poushkin. But this time he met with a point-blank refusal on the part of the theatre managers, and it was not until a few months before his death—in 1867, to be precise—that he had the satisfaction of seeing a public performance of this small work of his at Moscow. Somewhat discouraged, no doubt, he thereupon composed, during a period which covered several years, some

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hundred songs, airs, and duets, which were published through various houses in St. Petersburg. Some of these songs, which are interesting owing to their mood and their striking melodic character, became popular and undoubtedly had more influence than his opera in winning Dargomijsky a reputation as a young man.

He did not, however, give up writing for the theatre. But to mark his return to it, he wanted to be inspired by a national subject; and this he found once more in the rich repertory of Poushkin, from whom he took this time the enchanting legend of *The Roussalka* (The Water Sprite). The poem happened to be in dialogue form, and was cut up into sections in a way which was convenient and effective from a theatrical point of view, so that Dargomijsky, in adapting it for the stage, merely had to put a few touches to it, and was able to utilise Poushkin's splendid verse with its rich imagery practically the whole time. Some slight cuts only had to be made in the text every now and then, and at the same time choruses and dances were added in order to make the stage spectacle more complete. "*The Roussalka*," says César Cui, "combines dramatic feeling with fantastic colouring. The subject, whether regarded as a whole or in detail, is admirably suited to

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opera. One also has to remember that the poem is not, at any rate for the most part, the work of a mere librettist submitted to the caprice of a composer, but is quite one of the most striking things written by the greatest poet Russia has ever had.”<sup>1</sup> Everyone is acquainted with the poetic and mysterious legend of Undine, the water sprite, which is to be found in all northern countries. It is obviously a charming subject for the stage, and it offers the musician not merely an opportunity for delicate colouring, but also the kind of incidents which, if he has any gifts, ought to stimulate and inspire him.

Dargomijsky was inspired by it with the happiest results, the score to which he set the charming story bringing him fame and making him be considered the direct successor of Glinka. The opera was given at St. Petersburg on May 4, 1856, at the old Circus Theatre, which has been rebuilt since then and has now become the Maryinsky Theatre, the real national theatre of Russia. Gustave Bertrand, who had made a very careful study of Russian music in the country itself, spoke of the work in the following terms :—

“ *The Roussalka* is in the repertory of all the Russian opera-houses—at St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Odessa. Although it never

<sup>1</sup> *La Musique en Russie.*



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shows traces either of the genial inspiration or the striking originality of the operas of Glinka, it is almost as popular as they are. From the point of view of dramatic sentiment it is sincere and often exalted, and the declamatory recitative is truth itself; in the solos, duets, trios, and finales, the composer has followed the traditional forms of French and Italian operas. The style is both conscientious and ingenious; if it sometimes recalls the teaching of the classrooms, you feel at any rate that the classroom is a good one; and through all of the writing the personal temperament of the composer as well as the atmosphere of Russia constantly penetrates. In a word, it is an admirable opera."

On the other hand, César Cui blames the composer precisely because, "like all his predecessors, he has written airs, duets, trios, and concerted numbers," which, he thinks, "shows his inferiority." The members of the Young Russian School resemble Wagner, whose doctrines they nevertheless warmly repudiate, in claiming to eliminate from all operatic works anything in the nature of an air, a set passage, or a song: anything, in short, which can be considered a definite entity with a character of its own and can be detached from the rest of the score. They must have recitative, more recitative, and still more recitative! Outside



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that there can be no operatic music, in their opinion, and art relapses into barbarism. This is how César Cui speaks of the score of *The Roussalka* :—

“ On the dramatic side Dargomijsky reaches a very high level in several of the scenes. Looked at from this point of view the music of the opera falls into two subdivisions : the recitative in the strict sense of the term, and the separate numbers, as the detached songs are usually called. Dargomijsky's recitative is equal to the best that has ever been written. You may look in vain for commonplaces or for the tiresome, conventional phrases that can easily be improvised by any hack writer. Dargomijsky was endowed with the very special gift of knowing how to fit each period or sentence with the musical phrase best adapted to it, and how to discover a melodic style suited to each character. With him all the words of the text and all the details of the drama seem to be of a piece with the music. One may presume that none of these melodic recitatives, none of these phrases which are so truthfully accentuated, will be touched by time or oblivion, for truth does not grow old.”<sup>1</sup>

We see from this to what enthusiasm the writer was roused by the recitatives in *The*

<sup>1</sup> *La Musique en Russie.*

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*Roussalka*. If we are to take his word for it, it was precisely these recitatives that constituted the point of departure of the Young Russian School, and gave the signal for its preconceived doctrines, so far as dramatic music is concerned. So that in this respect the name of Dargomijsky and the part he played acquired exceptional importance, on which due stress must be laid.

This is not yet the moment for going into the history of this school, though we shall arrive at it before long. The last work of Dargomijsky, however, leads us at this point to skirt the edge of the subject. In this work, *The Stone Guest*, the composer pushed his use of recitative to its logical extreme : he used it, that is to say, to the exclusion of everything else, and so won the hearty admiration of the young composers, who were dreaming of a radical transformation of opera. "We come to the keystone of the new school of Russian opera," to quote César Cui once more, "in Dargomijsky's last work, *The Stone Guest*. We have already seen, in our analysis of *The Roussalka*, with what truth Dargomijsky manages to portray dramatic situations. In order to attain his end, he had even then broken with the customary formulas, and had begun to attach very great importance to *melodic recitative*. . . A group of composers arose,

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who, owing to their peculiar gifts and their attitude towards questions of latter-day musical æsthetics, ended by forming a new operatic school in Russia. These composers held the melodic recitatives of *The Roussalka* in high esteem. Dargomijsky joined them with enthusiasm, and, soon feeling the need of production, he composed his opera *The Stone Guest*."

All this makes up a small historical episode which it is perhaps worth while to make known. Dargomijsky's enthusiasm may seem a little excessive under the circumstances, and all the more so since he had neither the makings nor the temperament of a leader of a school, however distinguished he might really have claimed to be as a composer. The truth is that the little group of young composers mentioned by César Cui, which included, besides himself, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Balakirev, and a little later, Rimsky-Korsakov, was at the time entirely unknown and was not sorry, therefore, to take shelter under the authority of a fairly well-known name. All of them were twenty or thirty years younger than Dargomijsky, and all felt what an advantage it would be to them to have him as the standard-bearer of those theories of theirs which they intended to spread and wished to impose on the public. They rallied round him and succeeded, by



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the aid of flattery and cajolery, in winning him over to their side ; and then, by making him believe that there was no salvation for music except in emphasizing the methods he had employed with wise moderation in *The Roussalka*, they forced him to exaggerate these methods and to push them to their extreme limit. Dargomijsky, believing, in fact, that he had become the prophet of a new religion of music, let himself be persuaded, and ended by yielding to the ideas with which they were obsessed. He was, moreover, weary, feeble, and ill at this period, and suffered cruelly from an aneurism that caused his death not very long afterwards ; which helps to account for his not being able, when writing *The Stone Guest*, to recapture the free and glowing inspiration which had made the success of the preceding opera. Besides, anyone can easily understand that the effort of imagination needed for writing a score entirely in recitative (however melodious it may be) is less than is required from a composer, who has to give his mind to showing that he is capable of really musical ideas. Finally, the poem of *The Stone Guest*, which Dargomijsky had gone once more to Poushkin to obtain, had been conceived with a view to the theatrical and not the operatic stage ; it was, consequently, much too developed for opera. The composer, by



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refusing to make any kind of selection from his material or to cut any of the verses, was thereby condemned to be deprived in his turn of all opportunity of development, and was obliged to confine himself rigidly to the recitative which was so insidiously recommended to his attention.

Dargomijsky was, as I have already remarked, ill to begin with, when he began to set to work on the score of *The Stone Guest*. He had not time to put the finishing touches to it, and died before the whole could be completed. Two of his disciples agreed to round it off: César Cui undertaking to write the conclusion of a scene that had been only partially finished, while Rimsky-Korsakov orchestrated the whole. The opera was not produced until the month of February 1872, four years after the death of the composer.

It is hardly necessary to add that the subject of *The Stone Guest* is the same as that of *Don Giovanni*: the title sufficiently indicates it; but Poushkin treated it in his own fashion, making appreciable alterations in the story. As to Dargomijsky, it goes without saying, I suppose, that he had no intention of comparing himself with Mozart or of trying to compete with that masterpiece of his. He wished, as someone said, not to do better, which was a matter of some difficulty, but to do differently.

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The enterprise was, however, a dangerous one and, whatever the adherents of the young school may have found to say about it, it did not lead to very happy results. *The Stone Guest* was received respectfully but coldly by the public, and, as a matter of fact, it was never really a success. Its partial admirers console themselves by asserting that the public is not capable of understanding works of that sort and that kind of beauty. The burden of their complaint is familiar and the line of argument convenient. It is the way of those who do not manage to please the crowd to blame the crowd's stupidity. We need not labour the point.

To sum up, then: Dargomijsky's stage career, though it can scarcely be considered fertile, seeing that it comprises only three works, has the peculiarity of presenting three distinct phases. In *Esmeralda*, the first of these works, the composer borrows his style from the formal and conventional operas then in vogue in Europe. In *The Roussalka*, the second of the three, he endeavours, sometimes successfully, to walk in the footsteps of his fellow-countryman Glinka, and the music takes on a pronouncedly Russian character. Finally, in *The Stone Guest* he boldly repudiates his first two manners to adopt a third which only leads him to moderately good results. In a

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word : Dargomijsky, so far as the great public is concerned, is remembered and will continue to be remembered as the composer of *The Roussalka*, which should suffice to bring him, if not fame, which is perhaps rather too strong a term, at any rate a very well-earned reputation. In his work he has followed the track so magnificently opened up by Glinka, and has done it with an ability which no one could dispute. That is his claim to the esteem and the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen.

He began still another opera, *Rogdana*, in the fantastic style, but he abandoned it almost at once, and two choruses from it are practically all that is known to exist. Mention should also be made of his three humorous fantasias for orchestra: *Kazachok*, a lively and original dance from Little Russia which is full of colour and character, a Finnish Fantasia, and *Baba-Yaga* (also known as *From the Volga to the Riga*). There is also a Tarentelle Slave for pianoforte duet. As to his songs, which are very numerous, I have already said that the majority are worth attention, and that they have contributed materially to the composer's reputation.

It is time to deal with Serov, who occupies an important place in the history of modern Russian music. He owes his position not so much perhaps to his talent as a composer as



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to the very active, or perhaps I should say turbulent, part which he has played in the musical movement of the last century. His music cannot be called first-rate, though it would be doing him an injustice not to recognise its worth. But, having a speculative mind of a high order with a special bias towards criticism and being essentially combative by temperament, he took part with passionate enthusiasm, and almost with frenzy, in all the quarrels and controversies that raged from day to day round musical topics. This enthusiasm of his, which he brought to bear on all subjects, and more particularly on music, won him without doubt a higher reputation than he could ever have acquired by his compositions alone. He was a practised writer, and a caustic critic; he had a high reputation in debate, he was indefatigable in the lecture-room, and he was always ready for any cause to step into the breach and use his weapons alike in attack or in defence. He inevitably drew attention to himself in a variety of ways, and, in short, he has earned a special place apart in the history of the startling musical movement which has taken place in Russia during the course of the last sixty years.

Alexander Nicholaevich Serov was the son of a barrister, and was born at St. Petersburg



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on January 11 (23), 1820. From his earliest youth he showed signs of unusual intelligence and talent in a great variety of lines. He took up natural history; he learned foreign languages with astonishing ease, speaking not only Latin and Russian, but French, English, and Italian fluently; he had a pronounced taste for the theatre, he studied design, and above all, he adored music. He was taught the rudiments of the pianoforte by an elderly spinster, a relative of his, but he had no musical education in the strict sense of the term. One of his fellow-countrymen who became his friend after having been the object of his criticism, W. von Lenz, the author of the famous book *Beethoven and His Three Styles*, writes as follows in the course of a rapid study devoted to Serov:—

“ In 1834 Serov’s father sent the boy to the School of Jurisprudence at St. Petersburg. He left it in 1840 with a second prize and at once entered the Government service in the Senate. When he was at the School of Jurisprudence he took lessons on the violoncello from Carl Schuberth, but he did not keep it up. Schuberth and the elderly spinster at the piano: those were the only teachers he ever had; everything else he picked up for himself. The moment he had left the school, Serov spent his days over books of musical

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theory of all ages and in all languages, from Bach, Kirnberger, Albrechtsberger, Fürck, Catel, and Marx downwards; and he would write out for his own use his criticism of these writers who, to his mind, did not go far enough and were not sufficiently philosophical for his tastes. He was a prey to the idea of establishing a theory of music which should be simpler and based on surer ground than any theory of theirs. The further he advanced on this immense task, the more he neglected his Government work. He was transferred to the Crimea, where he was given the post of vice-president of a court of justice. 'I used to write little fugues,' he told me, 'during the proceedings in court—nice little fugues. One day when the case before us was the theft of a horse, they wanted to have my opinion; I replied that I hadn't been listening to a single word and moved the adjournment. I was then at work on my first opera, *A Night in May*. I've burnt it; it was dreadful stuff!' Serov gave up his career at the bar, to the great despair of his father, and returned to St. Petersburg, where we come across him performing the duties of a newspaper censor with an exceedingly modest income"<sup>1</sup>

The thoroughly practical way in which Serov studied musical theory all by himself

<sup>1</sup> *Le Guide musical* (of Brussels), November 1, 1877.

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led to his fully developing a critical sense the roots of which he is said to have had deeply implanted in him. At the same time one may suppose that this kind of very personal education disturbed to some extent the equilibrium of his powerful musical gifts. Indeed, Serov, who was an ardent admirer of the most abstract works of Beethoven's last manner, and was an out-and-out partisan of the doctrines of Richard Wagner (after having at first mercilessly opposed them), appeared to discover in Beethoven what anyone else might have looked for in vain—an echo of the old Greek modes! For these modes he felt such an affection that he dreamed of substituting them for the modern scale, and was quite ready to transfer them to the theatre.

However that may be, Serov made up his mind that, before he would even think of writing for the stage—he only began to do so late in life, when he was more than forty years old—he must propagate his own ideas and opinions by the aid of his pen and his tongue. When he became censor of foreign newspapers at St. Petersburg, he was not so absorbed by his duties that he could not find time to devote himself seriously to the questions which he had nearest at heart. He began by publishing, in a review called *The Pantheon*, a series of polemical letters which were intended to



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opposition against him, he passed the most contemptuous judgment on every musical authority of Europe and, like the modern Germans, he crushed, or at any rate imagined he had crushed, the composer of *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots* by calling him a mere mountebank and speaking of his operas as so many flashes in the pan.”<sup>1</sup>

The odd thing is that Serov, as I have already said, belied and contradicted himself with imperturbable coolness and self-assurance. To take an example: in 1856 he wrote quite openly in the *Theatrical and Musical Courier* (a paper which was founded and edited by Maurice Rappaport), that Liszt and the other disciples of Wagner were talking nonsense when they declared their hero's operas to be masterpieces. “They are laboured works,” he remarked, “produced by a dilettante, who certainly has plenty of talent but was no doubt unable to finish his studies. The general impression given by Wagner's compositions is one of unbearable tedium.” He also said that the melodic element in his works was “very feeble,” and that the greater part of his music was merely “tiresome droning,” grafted on to unpleasantly novel harmonies and pretentious orchestration in the manner of Meyerbeer or Berlioz. Well, in the issue of the same paper

<sup>1</sup> *Le Nord*, November 24, 1874.



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for July 30, 1858 (only two years later), Serov, having occasion to speak once more of Wagner, declared that a man must be an "absolute idiot" in music not to feel the "strong life, the poetry, and the beauty pulsating in his operas." He added, with more emphasis than politeness, "Let fools, then, stop their impotent raging against the immortal works of Wagner." It must be admitted that if his critical articles on music, an edition of which has been published at St. Petersburg in four volumes, owed their brilliance to any one quality, it was emphatically not to the consistency of their ideas.

While Serov was holding the opinions quoted above—that is to say, just when his previous scornful contempt for Wagner's music had suddenly turned into violent enthusiasm—he was at last bitten himself with a taste for the stage. During the winter of 1860 Signora Adelaïda Ristori, the famous Italian tragic actress, went with her company to St. Petersburg to give a series of performances, mainly of Giacometti's play *La Giuditta*, in which she had a striking success. Serov, who was completely dazzled and overcome by the powers the great actress displayed in this piece, saw excellent material for music in the Biblical subject of Judith, and made up his mind that he too would utilise it by transferring it to the operatic stage.

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Following the example of Wagner, who was now his favourite model, he determined to write his own words as well as the music of the opera he had in his head, and he at once set to work to do so. Nevertheless he did not draw up the outlines of the play by himself alone, but obtained the assistance of an Italian poet. He then wrote the verse, which in several places was touched up and occasionally rewritten by the poet Maikov, author of *Two Destinies*, *Savonarola*, and *Confessions of the Queen*, amongst other things. When he published the libretto of *Judith*, Serov very scrupulously marked Maikov's verses with inverted commas after thanking him for his help in the preface. Finally he settled down to work at the music. Being no doubt more influential, and having better luck than Dargomijsky had in his day, he was fortunate enough to get his work accepted, as soon as it was finished, by the management of the Russian Opera House, where *Judith* was produced for the first time in May 1863, with Sariotti and Mme. Bianchi in the two principal parts.

"Serov's style in *Judith*," says César Cui, "recalls that of Wagner in his *Lohengrin* period." And again: "Serov, when writing his first opera, had Wagner as closely as possible in view as a model, although he did not entirely sacrifice the independence of the voice

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part to the orchestra, as the German composer does. That method would never suit a Russian composer, and Serov himself considered it a mistake." The score of *Judith* considered as a whole is very uneven, and contains brilliant, highly-coloured passages side by side with others of very little interest. Nevertheless, if one remembers that it is the composer's first work, and above all his first work for the stage, one may well be surprised at the boldness and assurance of the writing. Indeed, I do not think it would be easy to find another case of a composer showing quite such skill at the outset of his musical career. If the score of *Judith* is frequently open to adverse criticism, one can at least point to a certain number of passages which deserve praise. In the first act, for instance, which is picturesque, though it is somewhat lacking in ideas, there is a striking prayer; in the second, there is a long monologue for Judith which is really beautiful, but it is followed, unfortunately, by some scenes which, with their heavy, clumsy recitatives, can barely be called interesting. Then in the third act there is the exceedingly powerful and effective symphonic episode of the Triumphal March of Holofernes, as well as the delightful double chorus of female slaves with its curiously broken rhythms, and some gracefully turned



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dances. Here again we unfortunately meet with long melodic recitatives without any particular point or interest, which enfeeble the action until we come to the last chorus. The fourth act gives us a fine air for Judith, some dance tunes, several of which are accompanied by voices and are perhaps still more attractive than those in the preceding act, and a wild, virile song for Holofernes—a kind of war song, full of character, written to the following words : “ We march in the scorching desert ; the breath we breathe is fire ; a horse stumbles, a camel sinks to die ; the heroes alone advance to the heart of the desert. A town, all gold, appears on the blue horizon ; an army bars our passage thither. To arms ! There are lovely women in yonder town that is paved with gold. Let us break the foe beneath the heels of our horses, and then in the city we shall lay us down to sleep like kings.” There is not much to be said about the rest of the opera.

Taking it all round, *Judith*, though musically only of secondary importance, was an interesting venture, coming from a composer who was making his first appearance on the stage. For this reason it was received, if not exactly with enthusiasm, at any rate with attention and sympathy. We have seen that Serov had conceived it when he was under the influence

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of Wagner's doctrines, having just returned from a tour in Germany, where he had met both Wagner and Liszt. He was quite decided about his desire to put these doctrines into practice and he also explained his views very decidedly, at the same time making up his mind to write another work in a different manner. When someone asked him why he had chosen to make his first appearance on the Russian stage with a Biblical instead of a national subject, he replied that he did not wish to appear to be walking in Glinka's footsteps. When his questioner expressed surprise that he had nevertheless not hesitated to imitate Wagner :—

“That's quite a different matter,” he answered. “Wagner is almost unknown in Russia. Well, people will get to know him, if it is only by looking at the style of *Judith*. Since this sort of writing is new in my country, it does not lend itself to comparisons, whereas the mannerisms of Glinka would at once have been recognised. I did not want to pass by the Caudine forks : a parallel case might have turned out to my disadvantage. Besides, I propose to write another opera on a national subject, as soon as I have discovered a phraseology of my own which will not permit of any confusion between the imitators of Glinka and myself.”

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The work, which he was already meditating, he lost no time in composing. It was staged in November 1865, only two and a half years after *Judith*, and in the same theatre. The new opera was also in five acts and was called *Rogneda*. He went for his subject to Russian history, or rather to a dim and somewhat confused episode of Russian history, occurring at a time when the people were being converted to Christianity. He was once more his own poet, and wrote the text of the play himself, as he did for *Judith*.

The main task which Serov is said to have set himself in *Rogneda* was to contrast the pagan and the Christian elements. It is indeed on the constant opposition of these two elements that the composer has concentrated all his skill, and above all it is on this that the effects aimed at in the music chiefly depend. One of my French fellow-critics has written of the work and its tendencies in the following terms :—

“ In the opera *Rogneda* we have noticed a curious contrast of different styles which are linked together by sheer force of will but are not blended. When the composer has to express the restless passion of Rogneda and Ruald, the tortuous methods of Wagner predominate. When he wishes to portray on the stage the amusements of a primitive court, he



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at once adopts a very simple harmonic style with clear melodies and square-cut rhythms. Every time the Christian element is introduced we have a very close imitation of the broad style characteristic of Church music ; a certain affectation of archaism is to be noticed in some of the religious passages and the popular scenes ; then everything becomes simple and unaffected once more in the songs of the women of the *terem*. . . One may urge that these different styles are imposed too abruptly on various sections of the opera, and yet one hardly thinks of complaining of the discrepancies, because each shade is always used for a particular purpose. The constant process of letting the music evolve naturally from the drama itself gives the work its unity of inspiration. That is, in fact, the ideal at which every operatic composer ought to aim, only, all effort and feeling of premeditation must be avoided. Now, when one listens to the *Rogneda*, one feels that one is in the presence of a work which bears the mark of undoubted inspiration but still more of deliberate endeavour. At least that is the general impression it gives.”<sup>1</sup>

One other point to notice in the score of *Rogneda* is the simultaneous employment of certain themes of a really Russian character

<sup>1</sup> Gustave Bertrand : *Les Nationalités musicales étudiées dans le drame lyrique* (1872).

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with the partial introduction of harmonies, recalling the Gregorian and folksong modes of ancient music. By this means Serov has obtained some curious effects. It should be stated in addition that *Rogneda* had a far warmer welcome from the public than *Judith*. The work made something of a sensation—so much so, in fact, that the emperor showed his desire to recompense the composer for his efforts, and to reward him for his success by making him an annual grant from the Privy Purse of 1200 roubles.<sup>1</sup> The one hundred and fiftieth performance of *Rogneda* was given in September 1898 at the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg, with MM. Jakovlev, Ershov, and Maïboroda, and Mmes. Kamen-skaya and Gorlenko-Dolina in the principal parts. This shows that Serov's works continue to be given in our time, though they are far from obtaining the success of the two operas of Glinka.

Serov wrote another opera, *Vraja Sila* (*Malign Force*, or *The Power of Evil*), in four acts, the material of which he took from a comedy by Ostrovsky. He had not time, however, to see the staging of the work, which was only produced after his death. In its form it showed affinities, up to a certain point, with the tendencies of the Young Russian

<sup>1</sup> About £127.

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School, and it was not only successful in its day, but it still has a place in the repertory of Russian theatres. The scenes with the populace in *The Power of Evil*, and the fiendish character of the blacksmith—a part which was admirably played in former days by the singer Stravinsky—found particular favour with the frequenters of the cheaper parts of the house.

It may not be without interest to quote at this point César Cui's opinion on the capacity of Serov, to whom he distributes blame and praise in more or less equal quantities :—

“It is mainly,” he says, “the scenes of national life which are endowed with picturesque colouring and vitality by Serov, whose intelligence, literary taste, and skilful use of folksongs served him well in this direction. In fact, all the scenes with crowds in his operas are painted in true and natural colours. Sometimes they are lacking in musical interest, but nevertheless they induce the right atmosphere, so that the imagination of the listener is easily attuned to the key of the locality and of the episodes unfolded before his eyes. The result is that the most successful numbers in Serov's operas are usually the choruses, the popular songs, and the dances. . . . Strictly speaking, Serov did not do much for the advancement of Russian opera. The orchestration he employed was full and



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brilliant, but much less distinguished than Glinka's; incidentally it was enriched with some touches of realism characteristic of the life of the people. If in addition to this we credit him with his numerous attempts to capture truth of expression both in form and spirit (Wagner being taken as the model for *Judith*, while *The Power of Evil* followed as closely as possible in the wake of the new Russian school), we shall realise that his work deserves consideration, and that amongst composers of the second rank he has taken and will maintain an honourable place in the history of the development of Russian opera.”<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the theatre Serov only wrote a *Stabat Mater* and an *Ave Maria* for soprano and orchestra. There are also a few fragments of an earlier opera than *Judith* which was abandoned soon after it had been begun and was never completed. It only remains to add that he died suddenly at St. Petersburg on January 20 (February 1), 1871.

Before concluding the first section of this book I should like to say a few words about two composers who ought not to be passed over in silence, although one of them was not actually a Russian, but only lived and died in the country of his adoption. This was Dütsch, of whom César Cui writes as follows:—

<sup>1</sup> *Le Musique en Russie.*

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“Dütsch was a native of Copenhagen, but he made Russia his adopted country, coming to live in St. Petersburg in 1848, and dying there in 1863.<sup>1</sup> He had at one time been a pupil of Mendelssohn at the Leipzig Conservatoire. All through a life of hard work he only met with sorrow and vexation, disappointment and bad luck. To earn a living he was obliged to conduct a military band, or sometimes an orchestra in a public park. The necessity of constantly moving from place to place and of undertaking more work than he had strength for, and finally the struggle with poverty itself, combined to hamper the development of his career as a composer, and at the same time, by shattering his health, hastened his death. In 1860 the public of St. Petersburg was introduced to his opera *The Croatian Girl*, which ran for seven performances. It may be that that cannot be considered a real theatrical failure: operas which have to be dropped without hope of revival are not played more than three times. Still, it must be admitted that it was not a success, and this is all the more to be regretted as the opera shows signs of remarkable ability. In point of fact, one can say that Dütsch is often wanting in originality and musical

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact he did not die at St. Petersburg, as César Cui supposes, but at Frankfort-on-Maine.

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character. As far as its form is concerned *The Croatian Girl* follows fairly closely the generally accepted models ; in some passages it is easy to recognise the influence of Meyerbeer, in others that of Mendelssohn, and several of the themes are borrowed from the Hungarian rhapsodies of Liszt. But in spite of these reminiscences one cannot shut one's eyes to its good qualities—to the vigour and vitality which run through the entire score, its good taste, the healthy view of art controlling it, and its bright and attractive orchestration. Dütsch's gifts are certainly not of the kind to set him on a lofty pedestal ; his opera did nothing for the growth of lyrical drama. But to persist in ignoring this charming work is to write oneself a partisan, for if it did not deserve to be despised by the public, it deserves still less to be ostracized by musicians."

The other composer I wanted to speak of had no influence on the history and progress of Russian music but was none the less famous, and deserves to be specially mentioned as the author of the music of the Russian National Anthem. I refer, of course, to General Lvov and his well-known hymn, *God save the Tsar*, which circumstances have lately made so popular in France.

Alexis Feodorovich Lvov was born on



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May 25, 1799, at Reval in Esthonia, and died on December 28, 1870, on his estate in the government of Kovno. His father, Theodore Lvov, was a distinguished amateur, and was made director of the Imperial Chapel, where he was succeeded in the post by Alexis, who from his earliest infancy had shown exceptional gifts for music. He very soon became a skilful violinist, and he made a special study of composition by diligently and attentively reading the works of the great masters. "Every moment left free to him, from the duties of his State appointment (which, in accordance with the traditions of the Russian nobility, he took up when he was quite young), were devoted," says Fétis, "to music, for which he had an irresistible passion. By persevering in this way for more than thirty years Lvov acquired a reputation both as violinist and as composer, which he thoroughly deserved. By honourably serving his Sovereign and his country he gradually rose to the rank of major-general, and in 1836 was appointed director of the Imperial Chapel by the Emperor Nicholas, who appreciated his merits as a musician. In 1840 he visited Paris and Leipzig, where his playing and compositions left a favourable impression."

Lvov wrote several operas: *The Village Bailiff*, in three acts with Russian text, which

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was given at St. Petersburg ; *Bianca e Gualtiero*, an Italian opera, which was also given at St. Petersburg, when the singers were Rubini, Tamburini, and Mme. Viardot ; *Undine*, a fairy opera in three acts with German text, which was played at Vienna in 1846 ; and *The Art Needlewoman*, in one act with Russian text, produced at St. Petersburg. He also composed a *Stabat Mater* ; six psalms and twenty-eight separate sacred songs, written to be sung by members of the Chapel Choir during service ; three fantasias for violin and orchestra with chorus, one of which was built up on Russian soldiers' songs ; and a considerable number of vocal and instrumental works of less importance. He also published, in eleven quarto volumes, an immense collection of old chants for all sections of the service of the Greek Church, harmonized in four parts, with Russian text.

But the one thing which, above all others, made Lvov's name popular throughout the whole of Russia was the Russian National Anthem for which he composed the music. In his Memoirs he tells the story of its inception in the following words :—

“In 1833 I accompanied the Emperor Nicholas during his travels in Prussia and Austria. When we had returned to Russia I was informed by Count von Benkendorf that

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the Sovereign regretted that we Russians had no national anthem of our own, and that, as he was tired of the English tune which had filled the gap for so many long years, he wished me to see whether I could not compose a Russian hymn.

“The problem appeared to me an extremely difficult and serious one. When I recalled the imposing British National Anthem, *God save the King*, the very original French one, and the really touching Austrian hymn, I felt and appreciated the necessity of writing something big, strong, and moving; something national that should resound through a church as well as through the ranks of the army; something that could be taken up by a huge multitude and be within the reach of every man, from the dunce to the scholar. The idea absorbed me, but I was worried by the conditions thus imposed on the work with which I had been commissioned.

“One evening as I was returning home very late, I thought out and wrote down in a few minutes the tune of the hymn. The next day I called on Joukovsky, to ask him to write the words; but he was no musician, and had much trouble to adapt them to the minor cadence of the first section of the melody.

“At last I was able to announce the com-



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pletion of the hymn to Count von Benkendorf. The Emperor wished to hear it, and came on November 23 to the chapel of the court choir, accompanied by the Empress and the Grand Duke Michael. I had collected the whole body of choristers together and reinforced them with two orchestras.

“The Sovereign asked for the hymn to be repeated several times, expressed a wish to hear it sung without accompaniment, and then had it played first of all by each orchestra separately and finally by all the executants together. His Majesty turned to me and said in French: ‘Why, it’s superb!’ and then and there gave instructions to Count von Benkendorf to inform the Minister of War that the hymn was adopted for the army. The order to this effect was issued on December 4, 1833. The first public performance of the hymn was on December 11, 1833, at the Grand Theatre in Moscow. The Emperor seemed to want to submit my work to the judgment of the Moscow public. On December 25 the hymn resounded through the rooms of the Winter Palace on the occasion of the blessing of the colours.

“As a proof of his satisfaction the Sovereign graciously presented me with a gold snuff-box studded with diamonds, and in addition gave orders that the words ‘God save the Tsar’

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should be placed in the armorial bearings of the Lvov family."

I will quote here a paragraph which I took from the *Gazette Musicale* of August 24, 1856, as bearing on a rather curious performance of Lvov's hymn :—

"The popular Russian national hymn by Lvov will be sung on the occasion of the Emperor's coronation three times over during the firework display representing successively the portraits of Peter the Great, Nicholas, and Alexander II. The first time, the hymn will be sung by a chorus of a thousand voices ; the second time by the massed choirs and by the military bands ; the third time it will be accompanied by salvos of cannon, which will be fired by means of an electro-galvanic apparatus."

Here is a translation of the words of the Russian National Anthem : " God, save the Tsar ! Strong and powerful, reign for our glory ; reign for the terror of our enemies, Tsar of the orthodox faith ! God, save the Tsar ! "

As a final piece of information which may be of interest, I will add that Charles Gounod, the illustrious composer of *Faust* and of *Mireille*, has written a fantasia on the theme of Lvov's hymn for pedal-piano and orchestra.

Schumann in his articles has spoken en-

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thusiastically of Lvov's talent as a violinist. Berlioz too, who was not naturally much given to praise, has given him the following very sympathetic lines, in which he brings out the variety of his musical gifts :—

“Most musical amateurs who care about quartet playing and the great violinists of Europe are acquainted with this eminent musician, who is a virtuoso as well as a composer. His skill on the violin is remarkable, and his last composition, which I heard in St. Petersburg four years ago—the opera *Undine*—the libretto of which has just been translated into French by M. de Saint-Georges, contains beauties of the highest order, and is fresh and alive with all the charm of originality and youth. Since he has been in control of the choir of the Imperial Chapel he has not only followed in the footsteps of his predecessors by obtaining a perfect execution; he has also given his attention to increasing the choir's repertory, which is already a large one, both by composing pieces of Church music and by undertaking useful and scholarly investigations into the musical archives of the Russian Church. Thanks to these researches he has made several discoveries which are valuable for the history of music.”

The quotation is from No. 21 of *Les Soirées d'Orchestre*. An interesting article on Lvov



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may also be read in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale* for October 11, 1840, over the somewhat unexpected signature of Richard Wagner.

It is, of course, to his hymn, which is really noble, imposing, and majestic in character, that Lvov owes his undisputed popularity. There can be no question of his talent, but I admit he did not make any particular contribution to the progress of music in Russia. Russian music, as we have seen, owes its emancipation to Glinka; Dargomijsky, by carrying on the labours of this great innovator, helped to establish it when it was once free; and even Serov was not without some influence on the trend of ideas in the direction of a national school. We are now about to enter on a period which is more or less contemporary with our own. On the one side we shall find Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, whose alert intelligence told them not to break completely and for ever with the traditions of the West, the educational experience of which they fully appreciated; on the other we shall see the members of the Young Russian School, who were no doubt a trifle too arrogant and had somewhat too high a sense of their own value, but at the same time obviously possessed original gifts. It was these young men who, with the help of concessions which circumstances and the public compelled them to

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make and indeed imposed on them as it were in spite of themselves, inaugurated a brilliant era in Russian music, the importance and extent of which it is still impossible adequately to gauge.

## CHAPTER V

Two independent composers : Anton Rubinstein,  
Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky.

BEFORE speaking of the group of musicians mentioned in the preceding chapter—the group comprising Borodin, Moussorgsky, César Cui, Balakirev, and Rimsky-Korsakov—who took to themselves the title of the Young Russian School and affected the loftiest disdain for anyone who ventured to have ideas of his own instead of adopting theirs, I must first deal with two composers who came in for a special share of this school's contempt, though they are precisely the very men who are the honour and glory of modern Russian Music. The two splendid figures of Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky stand, in fact, in conscious pride and strength, head and shoulders above these rivals ; and whatever the others may say, it is they who personified the most brilliant and striking manifestations of Russian music of their day. The gifts of such men as Borodin, Cui, or Rimsky-Korsakov are, of course, indisputable, and it would be unfair not to pay them every due ; at the same time one must admit that



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they pale before the powerful, original, and exuberant temperament of the great musicians whose deaths in the nineties plunged Russia into national mourning. Both were naturally endowed with unusual capacities, and both produced work with inexhaustible ardour. They left their mark on all branches of music—operas, ballets, symphonies, quartets, songs and works for solo instruments on a large scale—and they took up each branch in turn with the same facility and the same success. They seem, indeed, to have enlarged the bounds of human activity; and if their compositions are uneven they are so numerous and varied and so remarkable when taken as a whole, that one is ready to forgive certain weaknesses in them for their usually happy inspiration, which deserves the recognition and admiration of all who really care for what is beautiful and noble in music. I call both of them “Independents” because, in contrast to the members of the so-called “Young School of Russians,” they did not trouble themselves overmuch with preconceived theories, they avoided small sects and miniature shrines, they always refused to enrol themselves under a banner, and trusting to their own powers, preferred simply to light the way and to march straight ahead down the road which was to lead them to glory and renown. Let us take the elder of the two first.

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Anton Rubinstein was not only a first-rate composer, he was also indisputably one of the greatest and most extraordinary virtuosos of the century. I seem to see him still as he was some thirty years ago, when he came to play for the last time in France. He had the body of a Hercules, with a solid frame, huge, developed chest, and broad, powerful shoulders. His head was square, without either beard or moustache, the forehead was high and prominent, the hair thick and black ; the nose was strong, the mouth sensual, and the eyes, which were sunk in their orbits, had a look which, though piercing, seemed a little vague and undecided. In short, his aspect was that of a typical Slav with good-nature stamped on his features. Such was the outward appearance of this incomparable pianist, who astonished the old and the new worlds and was particularly appreciated in Paris, to which he was always glad to return, as he felt that he was thoroughly understood there and justly admired. As to his playing, it was simply prodigious in its virtuosity ; it connoted gifts of the most varied order and embraced the most contradictory qualities, combining grace and vigour, delicacy and power ; it was supreme in all things, it was adapted to all styles, and it afforded his listeners moments of unforgettable emotion. Rubinstein appropriately varied

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his methods with each composer, in order to bring out the essential characteristics which he understood so wonderfully ; but whether he played Beethoven or Weber, Schubert or Mendelssohn, Field or Hummel, Schumann or Moscheles, Liszt or Chopin, there was always the same perfection, the same pre-eminent technique ; for he always kept before him the same ideals as to what really constituted intelligent and poetical interpretation.

This great genius, thanks to his proud endurance and superb vitality, continued for nearly fifty years to charm and delight his contemporaries, winning admiration in all latitudes, as he visited one country after another. It would, indeed, be difficult to point to a single country in Europe through which he did not pass, or to a single capital in this Old world of ours (I am not counting the New) where his magical fingers did not wake the echoes of a piano, to the intense joy of all who were able to hear him. He travelled from Poland to Germany, from Germany to Holland, from Holland to Belgium, from Belgium to France, and thence to Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden and England ; and finally, he crossed the Atlantic and made even the citizens of the United States and of Canada marvel at him. He was always triumphant, and was as sure of his public as



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of himself ; at the same time he was always kind and generous, and ready to give his services for public charities and for the support of musicians who had fallen on evil days.

It may be of interest at this point to refer to the extraordinary campaign which Rubinstein undertook in 1885, when he organised a series of seven historical concerts of pianoforte music, playing the whole of the programme at each concert himself. The number of pieces in the seven programmes, when reckoned up, amounts to one hundred and ninety-three, and they represent the work of as many as thirty-one different composers. Now, as these hundred and ninety-three pieces include several sonatas, each consisting of four movements, as well as a complete cycle by Schumann, which alone contained more than twenty separate parts, we may put the total of different items which he played by heart without a single lapse of memory or a shadow of hesitation, at somewhere about two hundred and forty. Within a space of seven weeks Rubinstein gave these seven concerts alternately at St. Petersburg and Moscow, covering the distance of five hundred odd miles between them twice a week; and he repeated each concert for nothing, the day after the recital, for the benefit of the pupils of the Conservatoires and the various Institutions in the two towns. After this he gave the

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seven concerts at Leipzig, and then, travelling across Germany, he arrived in Paris, where he repeated each concert as he had done in Russia, playing on these occasions for the *Association des artistes musiciens*. The concerts were subsequently given (always in the same order) in Brussels, Vienna, Berlin, Dresden, London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Odessa. In a word, Rubinstein during this Homeric nine-months' tour gave one hundred and five concerts, in the course of which he played by heart at least fifteen times some two hundred and forty pieces, or in other words about three thousand six hundred separate items, without including the *encores* which he was asked for by an insatiable public and never refused. It may be added that of the £20,000 which these concerts brought in, nearly £4000 was distributed during the tour by Rubinstein in the cause of charity.

This indefatigable traveller, this incomparable virtuoso who was so prodigal of his gifts, found time to compose a dozen operas, five Biblical dramas (or dramatic oratorios), a ballet, several *scenas* for voice and orchestra, concertos and sonatas for pianoforte, violin, and violoncello, numerous trios, quartets, and quintets, six symphonies, some overtures and miscellaneous compositions on a large scale for orchestra, as well as almost two hundred

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songs and ballads for one or two voices to Russian, French, or German words, and many other works which I shall not enumerate. For five years he was Principal of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, which he had founded and organised in 1862 in the teeth of many obstacles, and where he succeeded in collecting on the staff such teachers as Henri Wieniawski, Dreyschock, Davidov, Auer, Leschetizky, and Zaremba. He also became Director of the Philharmonic Concerts and Choral Society in Vienna, from which he returned to take up his duties again at the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg; and he founded the famous Russian Musical Society, which has its corresponding branches in all the large towns of the empire. Of this Society he was both the chief conductor and one of the five directors, the others being Count Vielhorsky, Kologrivov, Kanshin, and Stassov. Moreover, he was for over thirty years virtually at the head of the musical movement in Russia, which has since become so intensely interesting. There are some who appear to be specially favoured of the gods to be able to retain their efficiency until they reach the end of their labours.

Anton Rubinstein was born on November 16 (28), 1829,<sup>1</sup> at Vekvotinez, a village in the

<sup>1</sup> This date, which is often given inexactly, is taken from the composer's certificate of baptism.



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government of Kherson in New Russia. His father, who was a manufacturer, left the village soon after the birth of his son to establish himself near Moscow, where he set up a factory for lead pencils. His mother, who was a good musician and played the piano well, noticing that the child always remained at her side, alert and attentive, when she practised, gave him his first lessons at an early age. But the little creature was so highly developed and made such rapid progress that she soon had to find him another tutor, and handed him over to Alexander Villoins, an excellent teacher and author of a highly esteemed Method, who took a liking to the boy and arranged for him to give his first concert at Moscow on July 11, 1839, before he was quite ten years old. The Moscow paper, *Galatea* (now defunct), mentions what Rubinstein played at this first concert of his. There was an Allegro from a concerto by Hummel, in which he was accompanied by the orchestra, and also an Andante by Thalberg, and four small pieces by Field, Liszt, and Henselt. Two years afterwards, in 1840, Villoins being obliged to make a journey to Paris, asked leave, which he obtained, to take his pupil with him. On their arrival there he brought him out at a concert where the little prodigy performed a variety of works by Bach, Beethoven, Hummel, Chopin, and Liszt. Liszt, who was present,

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showed keen surprise at what he had heard, and did all he could to give the child encouragement. Villoins and his pupil did not return to Russia until 1843, after having toured through Holland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and England (where Rubinstein astonished Mendelssohn as much as he had astonished Liszt in France), in all of which countries the boy played with striking and consistent success. He was even more successful in his own country, where his younger brother Nicholas also began to take up music.

Nicholas, who was born at Moscow in 1835 and died at Paris in 1881, was himself a very remarkable musician, and like his brother was an excellent conductor and a brilliant pianist. With his headquarters established at Moscow, as Anton's were at St. Petersburg, he founded in 1860 the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society, which he continued to direct until his death; and six years afterwards he founded the Moscow Conservatoire which, as its Principal, he organised remarkably well. Occupied as he was with his duties as teacher and conductor, Nicholas only published a comparatively few compositions, which are not, however, lacking in distinction. In the spring of every year he used to give a series of concerts at St. Petersburg. When a number of concerts of foreign music were organised in the Tro-

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cadéro during the Paris Exhibition of 1878, Nicholas Rubinstein was chosen to come and conduct three concerts of Russian music. The programmes were so skilfully put together and the works sounded so well under his admirable direction that public curiosity was not satisfied until a fourth concert had been arranged. Nicholas's success as a conductor was not belied when it was his turn to appear in the capacity of pianist, and he was greeted with tumults of applause after he had given a masterly rendering of Tchaikovsky's splendid pianoforte concerto in B flat minor and a Valse-Caprice by his brother Anton.

When Anton returned to Moscow after his tour with Villoins, Mme. Rubinstein made up her mind to go to Germany with her two sons, who, in spite of their youthful years, evinced a desire to study composition. At Berlin she obtained an introduction to Meyerbeer, and on his advice sent them to the celebrated teacher Dehn, whose pupils they became for two years. We will pass over some of the ensuing years to find Rubinstein once more in Russia, to which he returned in 1848. He settled down at St. Petersburg, now that his father was dead, and there he gave pianoforte lessons. He had by that time written a considerable amount, and he gave several concerts to make these compositions known. Eventually in



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1852 his first opera, *Dmitri Donskoi*, was produced, and was not only well received but also won him the valuable protection of the Grand Duchess Helena. This good and intelligent princess foresaw what a future the young musician had before him, and invited him to pass his summers at her palace at Kamenoïostrov, where he could work undisturbed. Rubinstein needed no pressing, and it was while he was there that he wrote, at the instigation of his patroness, three one-act operas : *Revenge*, *The Seven Siberian Hunters*, and *Tom the Fool*, each of which was intended to be a picture of the manners and customs in a different part of Russia. Of these three works only the last was produced at the time of its composition (May 1853), and it met with but a moderate success. *The Seven Siberian Hunters* was played at the Grand Ducal Theatre at Weimar in 1854. The German translation of the libretto was undertaken by that admirable musician, Peter Cornelius, the composer of the two successful operas *Der Cid* and *Der Barbier von Bagdad*, and the score was published not long ago in Germany. The other operas mentioned above, including *Dmitri Donskoi*, no longer exist, having been destroyed in the fire at the Circus Theatre.

Meanwhile Rubinstein's gifts developed to such a remarkable extent that some of his

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fellow-countrymen planned to procure him the means for undertaking a long tour with a view to his perfecting himself still further and making a reputation abroad. The Grand Duchess Helena and the Counts Vielhorsky gave him the requisite help, and at the beginning of 1857 Rubinstein left Russia. First of all he went to Paris, where he made a striking impression from the moment of his very first concert. He gave three altogether, which were a great success, and enabled him to bring forward several of his more important compositions. These included the string quartet in E minor with its delightful, muted slow movement; the masterly and vigorous sonata for pianoforte and violin (op. 19); the concerto in G major, which is an original work, full of lovely tunes and fresh harmonies; several minor compositions, amongst which were a Courante, a Nocturne, a Barcanolle, and a Valse; and finally, the symphony in B flat, which made less impression than the compositions for pianoforte. The whole thing was a great success for Rubinstein as a composer and as a pianist. I may add that the *Revue et Gazette Musicale*, after characterising the concerto in the above terms, went on to say: "The orchestration is brilliant and showy, but for all its richness it never stifles the themes, and when it has stated an argument,

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it takes up the answer with ingenious imitations that give a new and unexpected character to it. We do not know whether this is classical music ; we only know that it is inspired, and that it is also so pleasant and attractive to listen to that it roused the audience last night to a tumult of applause and made them insist on numerous *encores*."

From this moment onwards Rubinstein's career was a continual progress from one triumph to another. He marched across Europe like a victorious general, exciting the liveliest curiosity and the wildest enthusiasm wherever he went. The year after, he returned to Paris, where he found the public very well disposed towards him ; then, when he had gone back once more to Russia, he soon became absorbed in the work of founding and directing the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, and of organising the Russian Musical Society. He was also very much occupied with writing numerous and important compositions and with looking after the operas which were being produced in Germany as well as in Russia.

The position which he held henceforth at St. Petersburg was of the highest importance, and, whatever others may say, Rubinstein from this time forward found himself vitually at the head of the musical movement in Russia, and was considered by everyone, except by a few who



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were jealous of him, to be both a master and a model. He had won his reputation by main force, his skill as a virtuoso was undisputed, his influence on musicians and the public was immense, and if one has to admit that as a composer he was sometimes wild and that his writings are uneven and open to criticism, it is none the less true that he has produced some remarkable and often magnificent work in a variety of branches, and that his capacity for production was prodigious. Fertility, as everyone is aware, is a sign of power, and is the special mark of healthy, vigorous temperaments.

Rubinstein, however, had enemies, or at any rate determined adversaries in Russia itself, who, so far from acknowledging his superiority, seemed to kick against the pricks and always opposed him with an energy worthy of a better cause. These were the members of the Young Russian School whom I have already mentioned as being irreconcilable, vain and proud, as wishing completely to revolutionise music, admitting nothing to be good which did not come from their side, and refusing to recognise any musician who had the audacity to refuse to bow the knee to them and submit to their domination. This Young School was not afraid of making itself ridiculous by pushing its love of paradox to the extreme of denying Rubinstein his musical nationality. Let it not be

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thought that I am joking or exaggerating. Here are César Cui's actual words, which he has not hesitated to print : " It would be a grave mistake to look on Rubinstein as a Russian composer ; he is simply a Russian who composes [is it not a delightful distinction ?] ; his music has affinity rather with German music, and even when he wishes to treat Russian themes the spirit and feeling of Russia fail him." It was when he was discussing Rubinstein's " Russian " symphony (his op. 107) in the pamphlet *La Musique en Russie* that César Cui, the Christopher Columbus of a new world of music, hit on this admirable and laughable discovery.

So that, just because Rubinstein would not meekly consent to follow the advice of these gentlemen, because he refused to break entirely with the hitherto accepted doctrines and considered that one could still write good music by sticking to the old-established theories, he is to be put outside the pale and treated as a stranger and intruder in his own country ! And what is to happen then ? Are we to suppress the name of Rubinstein and blot it out from the history of Russian music simply to please his detractors ? Surely this is pushing matters a little far, a little beyond the bounds of common sense.

Moreover, the opinions about Rubinstein,

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expressed at various times in various countries, are often so strange and so at variance, that he was amused himself, and used to criticise his critics in his turn. In one of his letters to a friend he says with some humour: "The Jews consider me a Christian, the Christians a Jew; the Classics call me a Wagnerian, the Wagnerians a Classic; the Russians say I am a German, the Germans say I am a Russian." And all because he was simply an Independent, and did not profess adherence to any school!

César Cui generously devotes seventy-two pages of his pamphlet to an analysis of the compositions of Dargomijsky, Serov, and his friends, the members of the Young Russian School, and gives himself barely eight in which to formulate hastily all he can find to say about those two admirable musicians—Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky. He was obliged to mention them, their reputation forbidding him to pass over them in silence; but I should like to draw attention to the easy offhand way with which he deals with them when he does mention them. He begins by reproaching them with that very fertility which contributed to their greatness, as though fertility were a crime. "From earliest childhood," he says, "Rubinstein began to compose music of all sorts with astonishing facility. In this respect he is the real child of the century—the century



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of railways, telegraphs, and telephones. He has written operas, oratorios, symphonies, quartets, songs, chamber-music, &c. &c. This versatility of his alone may suggest doubts as to the intrinsic value of the compositions. Vaulting ambition may o'erleap itself."

That is sufficiently plain speaking, I think ; sufficiently summary judgment. But I should blame myself if I did not quote such unfair criticism in detail. It will be noticed that each time the writer seems to grant some quality to the musician under discussion, he immediately adds a "but," which negatives the effect of the concession first wrung from him. The passage is really quite interesting :—

"Rubinstein has an abundant fount of melody to draw upon ; *but* he is too often content with the first musical idea which comes to him, whether it be good or bad, rich or poor. At the beginning of his career his ideas were echoes of those of Mendelssohn, and they did not acquire a more marked individuality of their own until later.

"Rubinstein makes experiments in harmony which are natural and unforced ; *but* he does not appear to make any particular study of the new paths open to him in this direction. Moreover, although he is very skilful in his handling of musical form, and more especially of symphonic form, he proves indifferent to operatic

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innovations ; he does his best to treat any given situation on the stage, but he does not care to employ any other means than those of his predecessors. So far as dramatic music is concerned he has moved neither backwards nor forwards, and seems rather to have taken as his motto ' the happy mean.'

" Rubinstein's orchestration is perfectly balanced and sounds well ; *but* it contains few traces of the experiments in new and piquant efforts and ingenious combinations of instruments which are so prominent in the works of contemporary composers. Rubinstein has shown on several occasions that he is no stranger to what is being done in this way, *but* he does not appear to take any interest in it.

" If we had to characterise Rubinstein's music in general terms, we should say that it runs from the fountainhead without check or hindrance, that it is not wanting in warmth (though this warmth is sometimes artificial and melodramatic), that it has breadth, *but* that it is also too drawn out, and that on the whole it shows too many signs of the hurried, uncritical work of the improviser. We should add that there is a frequent absence of poetry and depth in it, *but* there are plenty of common-places, and that therein lies its principal weakness. The beauties, when they do occur in

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his works, are almost hidden by the obvious—that hundred-headed hydra which the musician in the audience finally uses up his energy in trying to resist.”

One can see how very unjust this is, and how under the handful of flowers, scattered in those honeyed phrases, there lurks a nice little cluster of thorns. But it cannot make us alter our opinion or force us to ignore Rubinstein's real worth as a composer. Whatever one may say about Rubinstein not being altogether happy in the theatre, the fact remains that some of his operas were strikingly and justifiably successful. And what composer is there who has met with nothing but triumphs ?

Amongst his most successful operas should be mentioned *Die Kinder der Haide* (to a German text), which was very well received all over Germany ; *The Demon*, which had a very brilliant career, and was given several hundreds of times at St. Petersburg and Moscow ; *Die Makkabäer*, which, like *Die Kinder der Haide*, was written to a German text and made a sensation in Germany ; and *Nero*, which was picturesque and powerful in style and grandiose in conception. It is quite true that Rubinstein retains the habitual operatic framework, and that is precisely what annoys César Cui, who is a violent and exacting reformer : he writes choruses, airs, and con-



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certed movements, and he does not lose himself in the endless meanderings of “melodic recitative,” which is calculated to send some people to sleep. But if his works are alive and full of feeling, if they carry the listener with them and rouse in his breast the sensations and emotions he asks for, have they not attained the end at which every work of art should aim, and ought they not therefore to be well received? I do not mean, of course, to imply by this that Rubinstein has written nothing but masterpieces for the stage. Some of his works are quite justly accused of being tiresomely long-winded, of having much too heavy a framework, and of being too thickly and closely orchestrated. It is nevertheless the fact that, when he was inspired by his subject, as he was in *The Demon*, *Nero*, and *Die Makkabäer*, his operas are worthy of the highest praise. It may be quite true, as César Cui maintains, that the tendency of Rubinstein’s writing for the stage frequently resembles that of the German school (though not of Wagner, whom he always opposed); but for all that, he is even in this domain a remarkable and exceptional composer.

I append a list of his dramatic works:—

1. *Dmitri Donskoi*, produced at St. Petersburg, 1852.
2. *Tom the Fool*, in one act, produced at St. Petersburg, May 1853.
3. *Revenge*, in one act (never performed).

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4. *The Seven Siberian Hunters*, in four acts, produced at Weimar, 1854. 5. *Die Kinder der Haide*, in four acts, to a German text by Mosenthal, taken from a charming short story by Carl Beck called *Janko*; produced at the Körntnerthor Theatre, Vienna, February 1861, with Mme. Czillag and the tenor Ander (who went mad in 1864) in the two principal parts. 6. *Feramors*, in five acts, to a German text by Julius Rodenberg, taken from Moore's well-known poem *Lalla Rookh*; produced at the Hof Theater, Dresden, February 24, 1863, with Schnorr von Karolsfeld and Mme. Janner-Krall in the cast. 7. *The Demon*, in three acts, to a Russian text by Vistakov, taken from a celebrated poem by Lermontov; produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, January 25, 1875, with Komessarievich and Melnikov, and Mmes. Raab, Kroutikova, and Shröder in the cast, and subsequently given abroad in German, Czech, and Italian. 8. *Die Makkabäer*, in three acts, to a Russian text by Mosenthal; produced under the composer's direction at the Hof Oper, Berlin, April 17, 1875, with Betz and Ernst, and Mmes. Brandt and Grossi in the cast, and then given in Russian at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, February 3, 1877. 9. *Nero*, in four acts and seven scenes, to a French text by Jules Barbier; given in German at Hambourg, November 1, 1879, with Winkelmann, Krückl, and Landau, and Mmes. Sucher, Proshaska, and Borrée, and then in Italian at St. Petersburg, February 10, 1884, with Sylva, Cotogni, and Valero, and Mmes. Amelia Stahl, Maria Durand, and Repetto in the cast, and subsequently in French at Antwerp in 1885, and at Rouen, February 14, 1894. 10. *The Merchant Kalashnikov*, in three acts, to a Russian text by Koulikov, taken from a well-known poem by Lermontov; produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, March 5, 1880, and forbidden by the censor after its second performance, but taken up again January 10, 1889. 11. *Sulamith*, a Biblical

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opera, produced at Hambourg, 1883. 12. *Unter Räubern*, *opéra-comique* in one act, produced at Hambourg, 1883. 13. *Der Papagei*, *opéra-comique* in one act, produced at Hambourg, 1884. 14. *Moses*, a Biblical opera in eight scenes, to a German text by Mosenthal, produced at Riga, March 1894. 15. *Christus*, a Biblical opera in a prologue and seven parts, to a German text by Bulthaupt, produced at Bremen, May 25, 1895. To these must be added a ballet in three acts, *Die Rebe* ("The Vine"), given at Berlin; two dramatic oratorios: *Das Verlorene Paradies* ("Paradise Lost"), given at the Königsberg festival, May 1863; and *Der Thurm zu Babel* ("The Tower of Babel"), given under the composer's direction, May 20, 1872, at the Rhenish festival at Düsseldorf; and finally three dramatic *scenas* for voice and orchestra—*Hagar in the Desert*, *Hecuba*, and *Songs and Requiem for Mignon*, a huge composition to Goethe's words from *Wilhelm Meister*, which was sung at Vienna in April 1872, by Krükl, and Mmes. Messnick and Passy-Cornet.

One of Rubinstein's bitterest disappointments was that although he adored France he was never able to have one of his operas performed at Paris. His *Nero* was given at Antwerp and at Rome in French, but he was far from resting content with that. He would have liked, above all, to present to the public of Paris *Die Makkabäer*, or *Les Macchabées* (to give it its French title), for he considered this one of his best works. A short while before his sudden death, he addressed the following letter to the French editor of his score, on the occasion of Mlle. Delna's brilliant success



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when she made her first appearance at the Opéra-Comique :—

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—I read in the papers that the Opéra-Comique is at this moment the possessor of one of the most beautiful contralto voices that have ever been heard : I mean Mlle. Delna’s. Could you ask this young singer if she would be so kind as to look at the part of Leah in *Les Macchabées* ? It might perhaps interest her, and in that case she could persuade her manager to produce the opera to enable her to create the part at Paris. I can guarantee its success if it is properly performed.

“ I should so like to see a work of mine, and above all *Les Macchabées*, produced at Paris. Is it really impossible for me to see it put before your public ? I really cannot understand the *boycotting* I have to submit to as a composer, seeing that all my aspirations tend towards this town of Paris, more especially, I repeat, when it is a question of *Les Macchabées*. . . . Well, well ! I must have patience, I suppose. Perhaps it will all be different after I am dead.—Yours ever,

“ ANTON RUBINSTEIN.”

Will it all really be different, now that Rubinstein is no longer here ? Shall we see, I wonder, *Nero* or *Les Macchabées* given one day in Paris ?

Rubinstein’s work for the stage, however,

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may in one sense be said only to constitute the smallest part of his enormous output. Let us take the orchestral music first. There are six symphonies, the "Ocean" and the "Dramatic" symphony being two of them; a Concert Overture; the overture to *Antony and Cleopatra*; the so-called "Eroica" fantasia and two characteristic pieces, each of them admirable in its way: *Don Quixote* and *Ivan the Terrible*. It was à propos of the fifth symphony (known as the "Russian" symphony) and of some other works in which Rubinstein has utilised Russian tunes, that César Cui wrote in an offhand way: "Of all his music, this is essentially the least successful." He adds: "Although he is a Russian by birth, and has done much for the development of music in Russia, Rubinstein is a *German* composer, and is the direct successor of Mendelssohn. He treats Russian tunes in a German fashion, which makes a very inartistic combination. He has grasped the exterior aspect of the Russian tunes: that is to say, certain cadences that they have and also their melodic contours; but he has not understood their spirit. He remains untouched by the poetry, the deep and tranquil beauty of our national songs." Well, I agree: Rubinstein is no doubt musically less completely Russian than some of his colleagues, who in other respects

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rank far below him. I agree that his mind has certain affinities with the German mind ; but he is far from letting himself be absorbed by it. His own personality remains alert and strong, and whatever one may say of it, this personality of his is such that, if you look at his music from the point of view of character and style, you could never, in my opinion, confuse it with German music.

If this reflection applies to Rubinstein's symphonic music, it also applies, and perhaps to a still greater degree, to his chamber and pianoforte music. Amongst the chamber music, the works deserving special mention are the quartet for pianoforte and wind instruments, op. 55 ; the string quartets, op. 17, 66, and 90 ; the pianoforte trios, op. 15, 52, and 85 ; the sonatas for pianoforte and violin, op. 13 and 19 (the latter being a masterpiece), for pianoforte and violoncello, op. 18 and 39 (the former of which in D is well known both in Russia and Germany), and for pianoforte and viola, op. 49. Then there is a class to itself of instrumental concertos with orchestra, of which there are five for pianoforte (the fourth in D being a superb composition), two for violin, and two for violoncello, the latter dedicated respectively to Alfred Piatti and Charles Davidov. All this instrumental music is marked by freedom of character, by vigorous



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rhythms, and generally by exuberant energy. It is essentially original, and even if one can point to certain faults and can sometimes reproach the composer for being too long-winded (this was Rubinstein's besetting sin), one cannot deny the brilliancy of the writing and its nobility.

As for the music for pianoforte solo, which comprises as many as two hundred and thirty-eight pieces, it undoubtedly places Rubinstein in the front rank of Russian composers. Whereas the orchestral music, for all its fine conceptions and flashes of genius, was uneven and sometimes over-diffuse, the music for pianoforte is noticeable for its abundance of melody, its variety of form, its grace and warmth, and finally for its assertion of the composer's vigorous personality. The majority of the sonatas are full of beauties, and there are many delightful pieces in such collections as the *Soirées de St. Pétersbourg*, the *Miscellanies*, and the *Album de Péterhof*. His waltzes, barcarolles, tarantelles, and songs without words are often extremely charming, and they serve to illustrate the composer's adaptable and fertile imagination; the preludes and fugues, though possibly a little too free in form, are hardly less interesting; and the *Bal costumé* for pianoforte duet is so famous that I do not need to praise it here.

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I have to return for a moment to César Cui : this time to point out the curious fact that in his pamphlet, which is called *Music in Russia*, and ought at least to justify its title, not a single word is said about Rubinstein's pianoforte music, though that of some more or less obscure composers is complacently alluded to. Anyone unacquainted with the subject might read the pamphlet without being in the least aware that Rubinstein composed for the pianoforte.

I cannot pass on without referring to the vocal music of which Rubinstein wrote such quantities. There are the delightful *Mélodies Persanes*, which have a very original character ; the attractive collection of duets, most of which the composer wrote expressly for Meyerbeer's daughters ; and the long series of songs for one or two voices, which are very popular in Germany, and are beginning to be known in France. Amongst these last some tiny master-pieces are to be found.

To sum up : Rubinstein may justly be accused of having produced with too much feverish haste, and of not having left himself time to give his works as much pruning and polishing as he should have done ; every now and again, too, he lapses into writing which is clumsy and is not characterized by purity of style ; and he was sometimes rather too ready to be content with the first idea that came

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into his head. But these defects were more than counterbalanced by some splendid qualities. He had ample inspiration and a wide, expansive temperament which made it possible for him to take up all branches of composition, if not exactly with equal success, at least with an amount of capacity which always proved him to be an original composer endowed with uncommon vigour. His music is undoubtedly alive, picturesque, and full of warmth and movement, and in moments of inspiration it carries the listener along in its train and rouses him to a high pitch of enthusiasm. It is equally the case that for forty years and more Rubinstein stood in the breach whether as virtuoso, teacher, conductor, or composer ; that he was an example to others in stimulating the musical movement in his country in the widest directions ; and that he rendered striking services to Russian music, for it was very largely due to his courage and energetic action that it became known abroad and was able to take a place commensurate with its ambitions. It is for all these reasons and more especially, it should be remembered, for the last, that Rubinstein holds a peculiar and very important position in the history of Russian music.

This, however, is the man whose worth as a composer some of his compatriots are willing to despise, treating him as they do



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with an affectation of contempt and a readiness to deny that he is one of them. Those who are incapable of understanding and admiring so remarkable a musician, of whom his country has a right to be proud, are indeed to be pitied. Rubinstein himself showed more justice and generosity towards these violent critics than he ever obtained from them. In a publication of his, *Die kunst und ihre Meister*, which was issued two years before his death and appeared in a French translation as *La Musique et ses représentants* (Paris, Heugel, 1892), he writes as follows about the Young School :—

“ In the instrumental music of our Young Russian School we see the result of the influence of Berlioz and Liszt ; the same influence, together with that of Schumann and Chopin, is felt in their music for the pianoforte. Beyond and above this we note a deliberate tendency towards nationalism. The productions of the Russian School reveal a complete knowledge of technique and a really masterly management of effect ; at the same time they are entirely wanting in formal design. Glinka, who composed several orchestral pieces on national dance tunes and songs, still serves as a model for young Russian musicians, who continue to write for the most part on the basis of these popular and national themes. By that they prove the poverty of their own invention,

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which they strive to conceal under the cloak of 'nationalism' or under the label of 'the new school.' I do not know if anything is to come of all this in the future. I am not without hope, partly because the originality of Russian music, as shown in its melodies and rhythms, should bring about a kind of fertilisation of music in general (a fertilisation which will also be effected, I believe, by oriental music), and partly because the great talent of some of the representatives of this Russian School is indisputable."

Now that Rubinstein is no longer alive—he died at his villa in Peterhof on November 20, 1894—and now that his reputation can no longer throw into the shade those who were indignant at it, perhaps hatred and envy will die down; perhaps his enemies will cease to injure him in order at last to render him the justice which is his due. However, even if they do not lay down their arms we need not fear that they will hurt his reputation, for, after all, they represent no one but themselves: that is to say, a musical coterie pure and simple. Rubinstein's country, which judges men by their works, and troubles little about petty jealousies and private prejudice, has been fair to him on the whole, and for a long time past has relegated much partial criticism to its proper place. It has honoured the great musi-

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cian in a fitting way, and has already raised a statue to his memory in the enclosure of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, which owes its existence to him. The following account will show what touching homage was paid to Rubinstein on the occasion of its unveiling.

The ceremony took place on November 29, 1902, when there was a grand concert with a programme naturally confined to his compositions. This was followed two days later by a second concert, at which *The Tower of Babel* was given with the help of the pupils of the two Conservatoires of St. Petersburg and Moscow. To illustrate the imposing and, at the same time, affecting character of this musical ceremony, I cannot do better than quote some passages from an interesting letter which was written to me that very same evening by one of my friends at St. Petersburg :—

“ Knowing, as I do, your admiration for Rubinstein, I want to tell you about the beautiful ceremony which has just taken place in his honour at St. Petersburg. The day before yesterday they inaugurated a marble statue of him at the Conservatoire, the work of the clever sculptor Bernstamm, who is well known in Paris, and to-day a large crowd has greeted a whole concert of his compositions with frenzied applause. The programme was made up of the orchestral humoreske *Don*



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*Quixote*, the overture to *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the Biblical opera *The Tower of Babel*, which were admirably given, under the direction of Safonov, the eminent director of the Moscow Conservatoire, by the combined orchestras and choruses of our two great Conservatoires, the total number of executants being five hundred and fifty. The most touching aspect of this huge manifestation was the way in which the pupils of two establishments fraternised together in their desire to commemorate the noble founder of our musical education. Two hundred and sixty-three pupils, of both sexes, from the Conservatoire of Moscow arrived at St. Petersburg at 6 o'clock yesterday morning, and went straight from the station to the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky to pay homage to Rubinstein's tomb. From there they proceeded to the Conservatoire, where they were entertained. This morning they joined their comrades from St. Petersburg for the final rehearsal of *The Tower of Babel*, which went with a freshness and vigour which were quite juvenile. Their enthusiasm at the end of the concert, when Safonov and the soloists were called to take their applause, was a pleasure to see. The three Jewish choruses (three marvels, as you well know) were sung with superb assurance, and the great chorus at the end was also given in a masterly fashion.

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“ There was another touching episode, this time in connection with the inauguration of the statue in the quadrangle of the Conservatoire. The ceremony began with prayers for the dead, the choir chanting them in the galleries above. While the hymn *Everlasting Remembrance* was being sung, the Grand Duke Constantine, and most of the congregation after him, fell on their knees. When they rose from kneeling the sheet covering the statue had already fallen to the ground, and at the foot of the marble the Grand Duke, who is Vice-President of the Musical Society, laid the first of the thirty wreaths which had been brought by as many deputations. Two delightful novelties by Anatol Liadov were heard at this inaugural ceremony : the one was a Polonaise for orchestra with a very delicate trio, the other a ‘ Hymn to Rubinstein ’ for unaccompanied voices, which was repeated this evening by four hundred pupils, when it was *encored*.

“ I will end up by telling you that the season is a good one for Rubinstein. The private Opera of the Conservatoire has just mounted *Nero*, which has not been heard for eighteen years. It has already filled the house six times, and *The Demon* is being played in three theatres at once.”

There is plenty of literature about Rubinstein for those who want to consult it. First

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of all there are the biographies in Russian by Baskin (Moscow, Jurgenson, 1886), N. Lissovsky (St. Petersburg, 1889), and Don Menquez (Odessa, 1889); then there are the composer's own *Memoirs*, which appeared in Russian in 1889, in English in 1890, and in German in 1893. The numbers of the *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg* for April 5 and July 11, 1889, and for January 2, 1892, should also be referred to. Finally, the following works may be mentioned: *Anton Rubinstein*, by A. van Halten (Utrecht, 1886); *Anton Rubinstein, biographischer Abriss*, by B. Vogel (Leipzig, 1888); *Anton Rubinstein, A Biographical Sketch*, by A. MacArthur (Edinburgh, 1889); *Anton Rubinstein, ein Künstlerleben*, by E. Zabel (Leipzig, 1892); *Antoine Rubinstein*, by Albert Soubies (Paris, 1894); and there is a curious and interesting pamphlet by Rubinstein himself, *Music and Musicians: Discussions on Musical Matters*, of which there is a French translation by Michel Delines (Paris, Heugel, 1892).

The determined opponents of Rubinstein embraced in a common dislike another great musician, Tchaikovsky, who was his pupil, and who, like him, ventured to follow his own path freely instead of swearing allegiance to any school or coterie. This independent attitude drew down on him the same disdainful sarcasms as were launched at Rubin-



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stein ; but he, too, paid little attention to them, preferring to think only of the art he loved, the public he respected, and the glory he hoped to win.

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky was born on April 25 (May 7), 1840, at Votinsk in the government of Viatka. He came of a good stock, his father being a mining engineer, while his mother belonged to an old French family of the name of Assier, who came to Russia as refugees and settled there after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Tchaikovsky was not intended for a musical career, as Rubinstein was, though he is said to have begun to show a very decided taste for music at the early age of four. When quite a child he was given a music-mistress to teach him the pianoforte, but she was more or less incompetent, being only a serf who had received her freedom. His musical studies at that time were, indeed, quite superficial. His father meant him to take up the law, and sent him, when he was barely ten years old, to the school of jurisprudence at St. Petersburg. One can easily realise that in such an atmosphere he had no chance of devoting himself at all seriously to the art which he loved and was one day to adorn. He stayed at the school nine years, and it was not till he had nearly come to the end of his time there that his father allowed

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the boy, no doubt as a reward, to take piano-forte lessons with an excellent teacher named Rudolphe Kündinger. It was only then that he began to study music thoroughly, and it was also at this time that his taste for it asserted itself really strongly.

However, he had no sooner quitted the School of Jurisprudence than he obtained a clerkship in the Ministry of Justice, where he had to remain as long as three years. But his administrative duties did not take up his time so much as to prevent him from continuing his enthusiastic pursuit of the musical education he had already begun. He soon became a clever pianist, but he was too ambitious to be content with that; he was well aware that one cannot be a musician, in the real sense of the word, unless one is familiar with the theory of music. Just at this moment Nicolas Zarembo, a famous teacher, who also had some reputation as a composer, opened a course on harmony and composition at St. Petersburg. Tchaikovsky joined his class, worked hard in it, and distinguished himself by making rapid progress. This was at the beginning of 1861. The following year he had advanced so far with his studies that he was able to gain admission to the Conservatoire which Rubinstein had founded at St. Petersburg, and, without giving up his classes under Zarembo,

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became the pupil of Rubinstein himself, working with him mainly at orchestration.

Nicholas Zarembo, who was born in 1823 in the government of Vitebsk and died at St. Petersburg in 1879, wrote a variety of works, of which the most important is an oratorio, *Saint John the Baptist*. When Rubinstein first retired from the post of Principal of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, Zarembo, who was one of the professors there, was chosen to succeed him and was in turn succeeded at his death by d'Asanchievsky. Like all who approved of Rubinstein and came into contact with him, he was scoffed at and looked down upon by the enemies of the great musician.

About 1865 Tchaikovsky, whose education at the Conservatoire was by that time finished, began to devote himself to composition. The first work which he produced in public was a setting in cantata-form of the text of Schiller's famous *Ode to Joy*, which Beethoven utilised in the choral symphony. This cantata, which has, I believe, never been published, was given in the palace of the Grand Duchess Helene, the patroness of Anton Rubinstein and of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg. The impression it made was such that Nicholas Rubinstein, who in his turn had just founded the Conservatoire at Moscow, thought fit to summon Tchaikovsky, and offered to put him



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at the head of one of his composition classes. The young musician accepted on the spot, and for eleven years he carried out the duties attached to the post, which did not prevent him from making several tours abroad, more particularly in Germany and France, with a view to improving his knowledge and familiarising himself with the music that was going on in the rest of Europe.

At the same time he gave himself up with enthusiasm to composition, and began to give indications of that extraordinary fertility of his which was brought to bear on each branch of composition in turn, and made César Cui remark that "Tchaikovsky would have had a brilliant career if he had only been a severer critic of himself, and had thought out more logically the direction he felt himself taking, and the system on which he wanted to write."

This reproach is not altogether unwarranted. The most impartial critic may, indeed, accuse Tchaikovsky of not having always been sufficiently fastidious in his choice of ideas, and of not having polished and refined them or given sufficient thought to their setting when they were once adopted. But before making a criticism of this sort account would have to be taken (as is by no means invariably done) of the composer's temperament, and of the nature of his own particular gifts and qualities.

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How many of all those who are marked out for a musical career differ from each other in their methods of composition ! One, in the fever of production and the ceaseless business of creation, will write swiftly and, for fear lest his inspiration should run dry at the source, will not have patience to wait until his thoughts have assumed a severe and chastened aspect ; another, less ready-witted and less fertile in imagination, will see them from the first dressed in more elaborate and elegant attire, and will spend time in adorning them and making them more decorative still. Boileau's maxim—

Take up your work a hundred times amain  
To polish and repolish it again .

does not apply to all musicians, whose temperaments, as I have said, must vary and must therefore involve different methods of working. Nature shows us dark and fair, lean and well-favoured, nervous and phlegmatic alike. To wish to apply to one and all the same standard and the same method of criticism is simply stupid and unfair.

To return to Tchaikovsky : if his work was not always on the same level and betrays certain weaknesses, it was because his hand was less quick than his brain, and because his ideas came so close on each other's heels that he

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could not always wait to link them and co-ordinate them into a perfectly harmonious whole. But when the inspiration and the working out kept pace together and combined to serve his needs, the results obtained were admirable. One has only to look, for example, at the splendid pianoforte concerto in B flat minor, the Valse-Caprice (op. 4), the Valse-Scherzo (op. 7), and the delicious Songs without Words in F minor and F major (op. 5 and op. 51), which Rubinstein included in the programme of his famous historical concerts ; or, again, at the Serenade Mélancolique for violin which Sarasate played all over Europe, the sextet for strings, known as the "Florentine" sextet, and the symphonic fantasia, *The Tempest*, which is no doubt unequal, but has power, breadth, and feeling. Mention should also be made of the beautiful variations on an original theme (op. 19), which was a particular favourite of Hans von Bülow, of the Scherzo à la Russe (op. 1), which Rubinstein often played, and of the series of three pieces (op. 2) published under the title of *Souvenir de Hapsal*. After looking at all this can one dispute that Tchaikovsky was a splendid musician, splendidly inspired ?

Some critics upbraid him for producing so much. One might as well complain of a beautiful tree for bearing too much fruit.



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Sometimes, it is true, a branch bending under the weight breaks off and some of the fruit falls to the ground ; but how firm and full of flavour is the fruit remaining on the tree, ripened by the sun !

Tchaikovsky's productiveness is, in truth, extraordinary. In a space of not more than thirty years he composed eleven operas, music for a fairy play, three ballets, six symphonies, five orchestral suites (the scherzo and the concluding variations of the third representing the composer at his best), a serenade for string orchestra, and four concert overtures, three of which—*Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and "*1812*"—might be classed with the symphonic poems, *The Tempest*, *Fatum* (the score of which was destroyed but has since been published by Belaiev from the parts), *Manfred*, and *Francesca da Rimini*. Then there are the three pianoforte concertos (of which the first in B flat minor is, of course, famous, and the second in G, dedicated to Rubinstein, is quite interesting), as well as numerous chamber works, two Russian Church Services, nine Church choruses, a Solemn March for orchestra, another march for military band, several other miscellaneous compositions for orchestra, some cantatas, about one hundred pianoforte pieces, as many songs, some vocal duets, and various other things which I have forgotten ;

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for I am not compiling a catalogue, and I cannot enumerate everything. But this is quite enough to make the mind reel.

Everything is, naturally, not of the same interest. One must pick and choose amongst so many works of different sorts, especially amongst those belonging to the earlier part of his career, which only give a partial idea of his gifts. Tchaikovsky, in fact, took some time to throw off outside influences and to assert those personal characteristics of his own which afterwards came out so brilliantly. One of his works—the pianoforte concerto in G, for instance, which I have just mentioned—would seem to be directly inspired by reminiscences of Schumann; another, or perhaps I should say many others, will show the influence of Liszt, who appears to have left a vivid impression on his imagination. It was only when Tchaikovsky was somewhere about forty years old that he really became himself and acquired a mastery of his own resources and powers of self-expression. This seems to me to apply above all to his relations with the theatre.

The theatre is the ultimate aim of composers in Russia, as it is of those in France and Italy. The striking successes which Tchaikovsky won in the realm of symphonic music did not prevent him from trying his

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hand as an operatic composer. He had no cause to regret his venture, for if he was not always lucky, it cannot be said that he always had reason to complain.

The following is a list of his works for the stage :—

1. *The Voyevode*, produced at Moscow, 1869.
  2. *Undine*, 1869 (destroyed by the composer 1873).
  3. Music to Ostrovsky's fairy play *Sniegourochka* (*The Snow-Maiden*), produced at Moscow, 1873.
  4. *The Oprichnik*, produced at Moscow, May 1874.
  5. *Vakoula the Smith*, in four acts, to a text by Polonsky based on Gogol's fantastic story *Christmas Eve*; produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, December 6, 1876.
  6. *The Maid of Orleans* (*Joan of Arc*), in four acts and six scenes, produced at St. Petersburg, February 1881.
  7. *Eugene Oniegin*, in three acts and seven scenes, founded on Poushkin's novel in verse, produced at Moscow, 1881.
  8. *Mazeppa*, in three acts, produced at Moscow, 1884.
  9. *Oxana's Caprice*, also known as *Cherevichek* (*The Little Shoes*), a new version of *Vakoula the Smith*, in four acts; produced at Moscow, January 27, 1887.
  10. *The Enchantress*, in four acts, produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, October 1887.
  11. *The Queen of Spades* (*Pique-Dame*), in three acts, to a text by the composer's brother, Modeste Tchaikovsky, based on a tale by Poushkin; produced at the Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, December 1890.
  12. *Iolanthe*, in one act, produced after the composer's death at St. Petersburg, December 1893.
- The opera *Mandragora*, which was taken up and relinquished about 1870, survives only in a "Chorus of Insects." Then there are the three Ballets: *The Swan Lake*, in three acts, produced at Moscow, 1876; *The Sleeping Beauty*, in three acts and a prologue, produced at St.



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Petersburg, January 1890; and *Nut-Cracker*, in two acts, produced in 1892. The popular *Casse-Noisette* suite is based on material from this last ballet. I have been given to understand that Tchaikovsky also wrote recitatives for the Italian version of Auber's *Domino Noir* when it was given at St. Petersburg.

Of these operas, *Vakoula the Smith* and *Mazeppa* were, no doubt, somewhat unfortunate, although *Vakoula* had won a prize in an open competition. But *The Oprichnik* was favourably received; *The Queen of Spades*, the second act of which has some remarkable things in it, has remained in the repertory ever since it appeared; and *Eugene Oniegin* and *The Maid of Orleans* have both met with striking success. The first act of *The Maid of Orleans* is quite first rate, and *Eugene Oniegin* was so popular both in Moscow and St. Petersburg that ten years ago it had been given over a hundred times in St. Petersburg alone, and thus put the crown on the composer's career. The success, too, of the ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty*, which contains some charming music, has been complete.

We had an opportunity in France, a few years ago, of judging of Tchaikovsky as an operatic composer, thanks to the excellent company of Russian singers who gave performances of *Eugene Oniegin* and *The Queen of Spades*. After hearing them we could realise what very striking gifts he undoubtedly

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shows in this direction. But one reservation, or, at any rate, one observation, must be made about the character of the music in these two very interesting works. We Westerns, who expect, in Russian composers beyond all others, to meet with originality, picturesqueness, and a national atmosphere differentiating them from our own musicians, find less to interest us in *Eugene Oniegin* and *The Queen of Spades* than when we listen to an opera by Glinka or by Rimsky-Korsakov, because the subjects do not permit of the originality and picturesqueness for which we are looking. *Eugene Oniegin* is, in fact, a simple, intimate, domestic drama, while the action of *The Queen of Spades* takes place in France at the end of the eighteenth century. In judging both these works, therefore, we must think of Tchaikovsky not as a specifically Russian composer, but rather as an operatic composer, pure and simple, without reference to his nationality. That being granted, we can do him justice and recognise his real worth and importance. If his ideas are not always *di prima intenzione*, as the Italians say, his music is none the less distinguished, expressive (often indeed pathetic), and always adequate to the situation. His orchestration may not show the refinement to which we are accustomed in the work of

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his compatriots, and indeed in his own music apart from the theatre; but it is solid and well put together, and it sounds admirable. There is warmth, too, in the dialogue, and, taking things all round, one feels that Tchaikovsky was familiar with the theatre and the theatrical point of view.

I have already referred to the charming ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty*. Apart from the ballets proper, several of his operas contain very graceful and very original dance music. In *The Snow-Maiden*, for instance, there is the clowns' dance, and in *Eugene Oniegin* the lovely polonaise and the waltz with chorus; there is a Russian dance in *The Voyevode*, and a *Hopak* (the Cossack dance) in *Mazeppa*, and so on.

Tchaikovsky could hardly help writing successful ballet music, for as a symphonic writer he had the highest abilities. He could be both impressive and brilliant, and he showed marvellous skill in his handling of the component parts of the orchestra to obtain effects of colour. He was skilful and subtle in his use of harmony, and was able to clothe his ideas richly; sometimes, indeed, he did it too richly and elaborately, so that there was some risk of the material disappearing from view under the embroidery. When he was inspired, the results were of the happiest, as I have remarked; what he lacked was a



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sense of balance and proportion, and there was too little restraint in the development sections, which are often over long and elaborate. But his orchestration was lavish, brilliant, and varied, and he got curious effects from some of his combinations, which were as novel as they were unexpected. As a single illustration one might take the interesting and original finale of the second symphony; but there are numerous orchestral works of his which prove what peculiar skill he had in this direction.

His chamber music is not free from faults: it is uneven in value and is somewhat prolix; at the same time it contains much that is interesting. The two lovely slow movements of the first two string quartets in D and F are perhaps worthy of special mention. The pianoforte trio, inscribed to the memory of Nicholas Rubinstein, is brilliant and full of picturesque colouring, though it is too long. It seems to me that the "Florentine" sextet, which I have referred to above, is the best thing that he has written in this category. In any case, it was not in chamber music that Tchaikovsky showed his best qualities or revealed his own character. His chamber works were for the most part written in the early part of his career, when he was still feeling the influence of Liszt and his school; it was

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only later that he acquired complete possession of his own musical personality.

Where Tchaikovsky becomes really personal and most indisputably himself is in the intimate little pieces for pianoforte, several of which are exquisite, and above all in the delicious songs, which are steeped in poetical feeling and in a mood of melancholy sometimes so intense that it borders on the dramatic. I have already mentioned some of the graceful, delicately written pianoforte pieces; and as to the songs, which are set sometimes to Russian, sometimes to French words, they are, for the most part, written with warmth, and often strike a note of pathos that is as noble as it is inspired. There are more than a hundred of these songs, many of which have become popular with French singers owing to their touching simplicity and emotional sincerity. I cannot mention all those which are worth special attention, but I cannot refrain from mentioning at least one or two, like *Déception*, which is profoundly gloomy, or *Oh! qui brûla d'amour*, which is intensely passionate; or, again, the poignant *Les larmes*, the curious *L'Automne*, and the original *Chanson de la bohémienne*; then there are *N'accuse pas mon cœur*, *Toujours à toi*, *Pourquoi tant de plaintes*, *J'étais une petite herbe des champs*, and *O douce souffrance*.

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[Tchaikovsky may not be musically so fundamentally "Russian" as certain of his colleagues and fellow-countrymen would seem to wish him to be ; he is nevertheless a musician of wide compass and high distinction.] His worth can be rightly appreciated by anyone whose mind is not befogged by the petty prejudices of sects and parties, or biassed by the deplorable presence of jealousy.

The public in Russia regarded with an equal respect and affection the two great musicians, Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, who proudly and nobly represented the youthful art of music, which had so suddenly blossomed out in the great empire of the East. Their almost simultaneous death—Tchaikovsky dying suddenly of cholera at St. Petersburg on November 13 (25), 1893, a year and a few days before Rubinstein—was felt to be a heavy blow for that art, which was by then in the vigour of its early days.

A Russian paper contained the following paragraph in reference to Tchaikovsky's death :—

"France has just lost Gounod, and Russia Tchaikovsky. The loss is not the same in these two cases. The composer of *Faust* had exhausted all that he had to say before he died in his seventieth year ; the composer of *Eugene Oniegin*, who was only fifty-three years



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old, was still at the height of a musical career marked by high ideals and a prolific output. The loss of Tchaikovsky is almost as much felt by Russia as the loss of Poushkin or of Lermontov."

It goes without saying that much has been written about Tchaikovsky since his death. First of all, his *Musical Reminiscences* were published, which consisted mainly of a series of articles contributed by him to various newspapers. Then Laroche issued a biographical sketch of the composer, and Kashkin wrote at length about him in his *Reminiscences*. Finally, Modeste Tchaikovsky, the composer's brother and collaborator, undertook a very complete biography, based chiefly on the voluminous correspondence, which contains much that is particularly interesting for French readers: amongst other things some individual and sympathetic criticism on Delibes, Bizet, Massenet, Saint-Saëns, and other French composers, whom he greatly admired. The Russian edition was published in three volumes by Jurgenson, Moscow, 1900-2, a German edition being issued simultaneously; and an English edition, translated and edited with a preface by Rosa Newmarch, was published in one volume by John Lane, London and New York, 1906. I must not omit to mention the following, which have appeared

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outside Russia : *Peter Tchaikovsky*, by Iwan Knorr (Berlin, 1901); *Peter Tchaikovsky*, a monograph by Karl Hruby (Leipzig, 1902); *Tchaikovsky, His Life and Works*, by Rosa Newmarch (London, 1900, reissued London, 1907); and an excellent *Notice sur la symphonie pathétique de P. Tchaikovsky*, by Charles Malherbe (Paris, *n.d.*).

It was for those, who throughout their lives had combated Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, to endeavour to replace them, and to pave the way for their successors in the field. It is now time that I should deal with these composers, and, in truth, this will not be the least agreeable part of the task I have set before myself; for, apart from the leaders of the "Young School," who are by now almost all dead, we shall find ourselves in the presence of a group of men who are really "young," hardy and adventurous, who write with conviction, are naturally gifted, and seem sufficiently strong to bear aloft the banner of Russian music.

## CHAPTER VI

The "Young Russian School": César Cui, Balakirev,  
Borodin, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov

WE have now come to the little group of distinguished but exclusive composers, who undertook with absolutely uncompromising zeal as radical a reform of opera in Russia as Richard Wagner promoted in Germany, although they emphatically denied their intention of following in the mistaken path of the composer of *Lohengrin* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. In the eyes of these reformers, who are apparently characterized by infallibility and a confidence nothing can shake, no good operas had been written between the death of Gluck and their own time. Meyerbeer, although his great dramatic gifts could not be completely ignored, was only quite a second-rate composer, while the French school practically did not exist, seeing that Monsigny, Grétry, Méhul, Boieldieu, Herold, Auber, and Halévy were barely worth mentioning; and as to Italian opera, they were roused to unmeasured fury by it and considered its most



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illustrious practitioners as mere puppets : I was almost saying, as musical malefactors. To listen to them, one might suppose that the Young Russian School had discovered everything as far as operatic music is concerned, and that before its time nothing interesting or intelligent had ever been accomplished. There is something really strange in the sight of these new-comers, who owe everything to their predecessors and would be nothing without them and the splendid work they did, treating them with this superb assurance and crushing contempt. One can afford to smile at it. Nevertheless I will not criticise their attitude for the moment ; I will simply state it, and I will do so in the words of the proud declaration of principles contained in that pamphlet by César Cui to which I have already on several occasions referred : I mean, *La Musique en Russie*.

Cui begins by informing us of the circumstances in which the little brotherhood was formed :—

“ In 1856 two young musicians, passionately devoted to their art, met at St. Petersburg. The Russian capital being the chief musical and intellectual centre of the country, they took up their permanent residence there. One of them was Balakirev, the other was the author of these pages. Some little time afterwards

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they were joined by Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, and Moussorgsky; and thus a little circle was formed of friends who were drawn together by a common enthusiasm for music. These informal meetings of theirs gave rise from that time onwards to most interesting and instructive debates, which ranged conscientiously over the whole of the then-existing literature of music. Criticism had a wide field to itself. Questions of musical æsthetics were discussed, personal points of view were exchanged, works were keenly analysed, plans for the future were laid and, in short, a thousand topics that enliven the mind, develop the taste, and keep the musical sense alive, formed the substance of their talk. In this way the little brotherhood ended by acquiring fixed convictions and by forming criteria, which they applied to a number of questions in the realm of art that frequently lay far outside the current ideas of the public and the press. While each member of the group retained his own characteristics and capacity, an ideal common to them all soon began to be sharply defined, and an effort was made to imprint it on their compositions."

We have seen the point from which they started; we shall now proceed to consider the end which they pursued. This, as I have already remarked, was the reform of opera. So far as symphonic music was concerned,

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our young revolutionaries thought, perhaps rightly, that everything had been accomplished, and satisfactorily accomplished too, by Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, and Berlioz. I find I am obliged at this point to make a somewhat lengthy quotation ; my only regret is that I am unable, in view of the limited scope of this essay, to extend it further. There is no need for me to insist on the interesting nature of the matter discussed in the following lines :—

“ Towards the end of the eighteenth century Gluck undertook, with all the weight of his authority, to restore opera to its rightful and original position, to bring it back into the paths of expression, and above all to establish it firmly on a basis of dramatic truth. So long as he was alive, his high ideal seemed to be attained and consecrated by the striking success of his own works. But after his death these fine, simple traditions melted away one by one, and Rossini did his best, save in *Guillaume Tell* alone, to reduce opera to the condition of being mere concert music embellished with scenery and costumes ; while he absolutely sacrificed truth of expression to brilliant vocal display distributed indiscriminately between all the characters : to the young cavalier of Seville, the Moor of Venice, and the Hebrew prophet, alike. A reaction, however, came about. It was first felt when it crept in with the cautious,



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incomplete half-measures of Weber, Meyerbeer, Glinka (in *A Life for the Tsar*), and Dargomijsky (in *The Roussalka*). Then there was a sudden change of front ending in radical reforms to which Wagner (in the *Nibelungen* cycle) devoted all his energy. It was at this point that the Russian composers of the new school, who had, however, as we shall see later, very few points of contact with the great German reformer, made their entry on the scene with all the courage of unshakable conviction.

“The new school in Russia tried to insist on certain principles of the highest importance, one of the chief of which was as follows: *Operatic music ought always to have an intrinsic value, as absolute music, apart from the text.* This principle has too long been neglected; even in our time it is not by any means strictly observed.<sup>1</sup> When composers were mainly occupied with pure melody and with writing a voice part to suit the virtuosity of singers (which are the infallible roads to success), commonplaces of the most astounding and ingenuous kind found their justification and passed muster without difficulty. What would have been rightly rejected as intolerable in a piece of symphonic music was quite naturally

<sup>1</sup> The phrase seems to me, however, to be merely what one may call a truism.

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given a place in an opera. In this kind of writing the Italians are not only supreme; they are without rivals. They only aspire to superficial success based on vocal gymnastics and the use of high B flats and C sharps, and they are in league to maintain the public in its uneducated state by pandering to its bad taste. Not content with wearing the commonest tune threadbare, they insist on displaying it in all its hideous nakedness without attempting to employ even a touch of delicate harmony to soften it. The best of their composers either copy one another or repeat themselves in the matter of thematic style and harmonization. By this means they have succeeded in turning their operas into a sort of series of bastard couples bearing an appalling resemblance to each other. To see what I mean, one has only to look at the thirty-odd Italian operas of Rossini, or on the seventy and more<sup>1</sup> that Donizetti left behind him. Each of these composers has written two or three typical works of which the rest are only more or less pale reproductions. And even in their masterpieces what pages

<sup>1</sup> Not "seventy and more" but only fifty-seven real operas, to which must be added nine little works of the kind the Italians call *farse*, which are on the same sort of scale as our operettas. Fifty-seven alone is far too many, no doubt; but it is just as well not to exaggerate the number.

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there are of insignificant and commonplace rubbish !

“ One finds a large number of composers who are not Italians doing almost precisely the same thing. They over-write and they think too much about the irresistible attraction of the scenery, the help they will get from the technique of the executants, and the pleasure they can always count on giving in the scenes where the ballet is introduced.<sup>1</sup> Would not even Meyerbeer, who is one of the greatest of operatic writers, gain a great deal if the princesses and queens in his operas with all their florid runs were suppressed ?

“ The new Russian school looks at the question from an entirely different point of view. According to its principles, nothing ought to stand in the way of operatic music being itself *true and beautiful music*. The most seductive means at music's disposal—the charm of harmony, the science of counterpoint, orchestration with its colour and polyphony—ought, all equally, to be pressed into service. But the application of this principle may perhaps not appear to be very practical. It may seem as

<sup>1</sup> This is clearly a hit at French composers, whom the writer could hardly specify more precisely, seeing that he was addressing French readers. So much the worse for *La Muette de Portici*, *La Juive*, *Faust*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Carmen*, *Hamlet*, *Le Roi de Lahore*, *Sigurd*, &c., who are directly aimed at here.



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though a moment of repose here and there for the introduction of a commonplace passage, varying in length according to circumstances, would be much appreciated by the audience, who would thus be saved the fatigue of having to keep their attention too closely fixed on the music. Not at all! The Russian school scorns to take advantage of such schemes, however attractive they may look, and refuses to make any such concessions. In this matter nothing will induce it to change its point of view. It will march quietly and proudly towards the ideal to which it is summoned—towards the living fount of intelligence, honesty, and eternal poetry—without troubling its head about future failure or success.”

The young Russian school, then, reverts, according to César Cui, to the old-fashioned formula of “Art for Art’s sake,” with contempt for the public as their motto. The formula was once in favour with our Romantic school, but it has long since been abandoned, as its inanity has been sufficiently recognised. Moreover, seeing that it is generally the public for whom art, in the last resort, is produced, one may be permitted to inquire, in the face of such proud claims, what the ultimate aim pursued may be. But, I repeat, it is easy enough to jeer at what has been done, when one does not come on the scene oneself until

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after two or three centuries of varied effort and accomplishment, when one can take advantage of the accumulated results of long experience, and has not to grope one's way ahead, seeing that the path has already been levelled by the great mass of one's predecessors. This is precisely the situation in which the new Russian school found itself. All it had to do was to gather the fruits that others had had so much trouble to raise from the soil. When it affirms in peremptory tones that it has monopolised the conscience of artists (which amounts to saying that all goods produced elsewhere are stamped with downright and deliberate dishonesty)—when the new school does that, it runs the risk not only of having the laugh against itself, but also of alienating the sympathy of all save a few second-rate individuals, whose sympathy is not of much account.

All this, however, does not in any way detract from the very real and active ability of the members of the little brotherhood, of whom the most prominent in the eyes of the world is undoubtedly Rimsky-Korsakov, and the most turbulent César Cui, while Balakirev stands at the actual head of the school. Since Cui has always made himself the spokesman of the band: since it has been through him that the public has been made aware of the theories and ambitions of this noisy little

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group, we will give him his due and deal with him first.

The passion for music was so strong in César Cui that he managed to cultivate it very busily, without however neglecting the absorbing work involved in an honourable and brilliant military career. Cui should have a special claim on us French, for although his mother was a Lithuanian, his father was a Frenchman. Traces of his father are undoubtedly to be found in him, more particularly perhaps in the polemical liveliness and the combative temperament which in France are the invariable accompaniment of a discussion on æsthetics. A sympathetic and devoted biographer has told the story of his parentage in the following words:—

“His father, Antoine Cui, was in Napoleon’s Grand Army of 1812, and being wounded at Smolensk and left half-frozen, he was unable to rejoin it on retreat. Left in Russia, he settled down there as many of his companions did, married, and took to teaching as a profession. He acted as tutor in several well-to-do families and finally became professor of French at the High School at Vilna. He must have been a man of remarkable gifts. He learnt Polish perfectly and spoke it fluently; he studied the pianoforte without a teacher and succeeded in learning enough about it to be able to give rudimentary lessons; he



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composed the music (and quite good music it is, too) of a number of songs; he published a *Résumé of the History of French Literature*; and although his resources were modest, he left a reputable library behind him and a collection of coins. His French animation, his gaiety, and his wit made his company very much sought after. Cui's mother, Julie Gusevitch, who belonged to the lesser nobility of Lithuania, was a woman of angelic goodness, full of self-denial and living only for her children. To her they owe not only their physical existence but also their sense of moral values.”<sup>1</sup>

~ César Antonovich Cui, who was born at Vilna on January 18, 1835, entered on a military career at an early age. After having made excellent progress in his studies at the Vilna High School, he entered the School of Military Engineering at St. Petersburg. At the present time he holds the rank of major-general and until quite recently was Assistant-Professor of Fortifications in the three Military Academies of the town—the Staff College and the Schools of Military Engineering and Artillery. Amongst his pupils have been the present Emperor, seven grand dukes, and the famous General Skobelev, the hero of the Russo-Turkish war. As a writer on military subjects

<sup>1</sup> *César Cui*, a critical sketch by the Comtesse de Mercy-Argenteau. (Paris, Fischbacher, 1888.)

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he is the author of an *Abridged History of Permanent Fortification*, a *Manual of Flying Fortification*, and several other works of less importance.

Given a career of this sort and the results it led to, Cui must have had a profound and sincere love of music to take it up simultaneously, especially as it involved a busy and polemical life which, after all, was not without an interest of its own. Although music is not actually Cui's profession, seeing that he never tried to live on it, he studied and practised it with sufficient thoroughness to justify his considering himself a professional musician and not an amateur. But for this very reason he must not be astonished at being judged somewhat severely both as critic and composer.

Cui began to work at music with two obscure teachers named Hermann and Dio. The better part of his musical education he owed to the well-known Polish composer Stanislas Moniuszko ; the rest he picked up for himself by his own exertions. He was barely twenty-two when in 1857 he wrote his first opera *The Prisoner in the Caucasus*, which was not produced until 1883, twenty-six years after it was composed. The text was taken from an early poem by Poushkin and the work was originally in two acts. It was only much later, when there was a question of putting it on the

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stage, that Cui added a third act, which was inserted between the two already written and thereby became Act ii. When one considers what the ideas were which were simmering at that time in the composer's head, one can understand that there was an appreciable incongruity in style between the new addition and the two earlier acts, in spite of the fact that the whole score was considerably remodelled. *The Prisoner in the Caucasus* met with a cold reception and was only given a few performances. It was produced in a French translation in the Théâtre Royal at Liège with a certain amount of success on January 13, 1886.

But although this was the first work Cui wrote with a view to the stage, it did not mark his first appearance in the theatre, for, some time before this, he had had two other works produced. One was *William Ratcliff*, an opera in three acts, which was written to the text of Henri Heine's tragedy in a translation by Plestcheiev and was produced on February 26, 1869. The other was *Angelo*, which was in four acts and was an adaptation by Bourenin of Victor Hugo's play. This was produced on January 13, 1876. The reception of these two works by the public was lukewarm. *William Ratcliff* ran for eight performances and little more was heard of it till it was revived in 1900 at Moscow. *Angelo* had no better luck,



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and an attempt to revive it at the Court Theatre at Moscow in 1901 was not successful. Moreover, such originality as Cui possesses does not come out strongly (however much he might wish it to) in his operatic music. In support of this view I will quote the following opinion on *William Ratcliff*—an indulgent one, too—written by his fellow-critic Hermann Laroche :—

“Cui’s gift for melody is not abundant. His tunes cannot exactly be called common ; one merely feels that they lack individuality. One cannot point at any particular place to plagiarism, or indicate the source from which such and such a motive has been taken, for they have not been stolen from anywhere ; they have simply been suggested ; and these suggested ideas, which are adapted with much taste and sense of beauty, take the place, in Cui’s writing, as in that of so many others, of original melodic invention. But though they lack originality, the themes in *Ratcliff* often consist of lovely, singing melodies, as may be seen by looking at the prelude to the third act, almost the whole of the heroine Mary’s part, and the duet between her and Ratcliff. The male-voice parts are much less successful than those written for soprano.”

It is somewhat remarkable that Cui, who prides himself on being a *Russian* composer

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and reproaches Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky so severely for their lack of nationality, should of all people choose the subjects of his operas outside Russia. While his fellow-musicians were making use of the poems of their countrymen, Poushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, or Ostrovsky, Cui took his texts solely<sup>1</sup> from foreign writers. For *William Ratcliff* he went to Heine, for *Angelo* to Victor Hugo; *Le Flibustier*, which he wrote specially for France, he took from Jean Richepin; *The Saracen*, which was given in 1899 at the Court Theatre at St. Petersburg, was founded on Dumas's play *Charles VII chez ses grands Vassaux*, and *Mademoiselle Fifi*, which appeared in 1904, was taken from a tale by Maupassant.

We have already seen (and have been told by Cui himself) what the ambitious programme was which the members of the young Russian school had drawn up: we have seen that they aimed at nothing less than the radical reform of opera. To set about it, they adopted the famous system of melodic recitative, Cui's account of which we have quoted when dealing with Dargomijsky; they also absolutely forbade any repetition of the words, and, finally, they insisted on having no duets, trios, or any

<sup>1</sup> Except those of *A Feast in Time of Plague* (Moscow, 1901), and *The Captain's Daughter* (St. Petersburg, 1911), both of which are from Poushkin.

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kind of concerted movement and, above all, no numbers written in a definite and predetermined form. This doctrine of theirs has much in common with that of Wagner, although Cui for his part vigorously refutes the imputation of any kind of resemblance to the composer of *Parsifal*. Nevertheless he made considerable use of the vaunted method of melodic recitative (which is not always so very melodic) in his score of *Angelo*, and again in *Le Flibustier*; but in spite of it the former was not a success and the latter, which was produced at the Opéra-Comique on January 22, 1894, was so dull that it only ran for four nights.

Moreover César Cui, who has his own inveterate dislikes, professes to feel an entire and profound contempt for the race of librettists. I certainly do not propose to absolve the whole lot of them of their sins, but I do think that some poetic texts of operas are not to be despised and that they must have had some kind of share in inspiring their composers. I might mention in this connection, *Œdipus at Colonos*, *La Juive*, *Les Huguenots*, *Le Prophète*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Aïda*. But Cui is absolutely rigid and will not listen to reason on this subject. What he insists on above everything is the necessity of having fine verse to set. In this he is making a mistake, for it is clear that a pathetic or powerful situation,



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even when put into poor verse, will be of more use to an operatic composer and will have more effect on the public than any amount of melodious verse clothing action which is weak and inconsistent. Anyhow, let us see what he does. He takes *Le Flibustier*, a charming comedy in verse by Richepin, but with a subject that is unsuited to music because it is almost entirely wanting in movement and action, everything taking place by means of conversation and exchange of ideas between the various characters. He puts this comedy on his piano and proceeds to set it to music, straight through from end to end. But the verse happens to be alexandrine : that is to say, the type of verse the most hostile to music. What does that matter ? The composer goes grimly on to the end of his task, and with his passion for melodic recitative writes three acts of recitative and calls it an opera ! You should ask the audience what they make of it all and what they think of Cui's theories ! Still, there are one or two attractive passages in the musical version of *Le Flibustier* : as, for instance, Janik's charming song in the first act, Jacquemin's story of the battle and, more especially, the *Angelus* for two female voices, which is a really delightful piece of melodious writing with an exquisite accompaniment. But three acts of recitative,

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melodic recitative too—no, that is really asking a little too much !

As a matter of fact, Cui has never been successful with any of his operatic works, and this want of success is probably due not so much to the nature of his gifts as to his unfortunate theories. He no doubt derives consolation from the contempt with which he regards the public. The misfortune is that the false ideas which he strives to propagate do a good deal of damage to music and make converts in his own country, who are apt to exaggerate them to a still further degree. To illustrate this point I will quote the words of an eminent Belgian musician, Louis Brassin, the composer, who can hardly be ranked as a reactionary seeing that he was one of the most ardent advocates of Wagner's music in Belgium :—

“Side by side with the young Russian school, of which Borodin is the undisputed head, there exists a small but very active group, professing theories of music which are absolutely anarchical. The works produced by this group are to some extent allied to those of the literary decadents and, like them, require preliminary initiation if they are to be anything more than a dead letter. The method of writing is peculiar, more particularly as regards accentuation ; the form is vague

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and gives a feeling of incoherence and shapelessness ; the harmonization is uncommonly audacious and ruthlessly breaks the rules of musical syntax. It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to add that the musicians who make up this group speak with lofty disdain of the old composers who are the chief glories of our art and that some of them already consider Wagner old-fashioned."

This is probably the best place to illustrate Cui's personal feelings towards Wagner. We have noted in the earlier part of this chapter his general attitude towards such composers as Meyerbeer, Rossini, and Donizetti. I say nothing of the French school, which, as I have already mentioned, does not exist in the eyes of this savage iconoclast or is no doubt considered by him to be of too little importance to deserve any mention. But what is interesting is to know the opinion the Russian musical reformer had of the German reformer whose tendency might at first sight be supposed to be on similar lines to his own. We will see what Cui thought of Wagner by quoting to begin with this pungent criticism of his works in general :—

"Wagner's operas," he writes, "are a tremendous mystification to which he himself fell a victim ; for there is every reason to suppose that he mistook his meaningless noises for real music, and his tedious phrases for



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heavenly melody, believing each of his notes to be worth its weight in gold. I should like to save my fellow-countrymen from the dangerous contagion of Wagnerian decadence. The man who likes his empty music has ceased to like real music ; the man who cares for his operas is bound to consider Glinka a composer of vaudevilles. In fact, the desire to discover something deep where there is really nothing whatever can only have alarming consequences and drive people to madness. I say this in all seriousness and can quote examples of what I mean. Joseph Rubinstein, the accompanist, went mad on the occasion of the first performance of *The Ring* at Bayreuth, and one cannot doubt that Wagner's music must have had something to do with the death of his royal friend. So that I trust that I may end my days without boring my readers any more by dissertations on Wagner's music, and I trust equally that he will refrain from boring me any more with his unmusical operas."

So much for his general opinion. To come to details, let us see what he thinks of *Die Walküre*. After having analysed it at length, he says : " I have very carefully examined not only every oasis but even the smallest thickets that are to be found in this sandy waste of an opera, and, as you see, I have found little enough, when you consider that the entertain-

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ment lasts from eight o'clock until midnight. The complete absence of music in *Die Walküre* weighs on us and induces a state of tedium which it is useless to fight against."

"*Siegfried*," he writes, "contains a series of interesting scenes which, however, produce a confused impression, because they change too quickly, are without definite form, and do not hang together. Each scene encroaches on the next and hides the one before. As to lyrical or dramatic episodes designed to stir the deeper feelings, they are few and far between and they can hardly be called successful. *Siegfried* appeals strongly to the intellect, not much to the ear, and still less to the emotions."

I will finish with a sentence on *Tristan und Isolde*, which may well make French Wagnerians' hair stand on end, though Cui actually preferred it to *The Ring* and called it the "least unbearable" of Wagner's operas: "If one was to make a door grate on its hinges for three and a half hours (the time taken by a performance of *Tristan*) and was to listen to its grating with the same devout concentration as is given to Wagner's opera, one would get the same impression and the same nervous stimulus."

I have borrowed the passages quoted above from an interesting essay by M. Michel Delines,

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published in *La Bibliothèque Universelle* of Lausanne for September 1902.

If we turn from this criticism which is expressly directed against Wagner to César Cui's general views, we shall be justified in asserting that the expression of such exaggerated and destructive opinions undoubtedly rendered poor service to Russian music and musicians ; for it was bound to check their scope by bringing them into false paths leading nowhere in particular. For over thirty years he has tried to propagate and defend his opinions in numerous reviews : in the *Nouvelliste du Nord*, the *Golos*, the *Russian Journal of St. Petersburg*, *La Nedicla* (*The Week*), and again in the *Musical Review* published by Bessel, of which he was the vigorous editor, and even in certain French organs such as the *Revue et Gazette musicale* and *Le Ménestrel*. It is only fair to say that his articles have been vigorously challenged in Russia by ardent opponents and that the composer has perhaps suffered at times from his critics' want of moderation. For, apart from the theatre, which is not his proper sphere and where he has consequently not been able to win success, Cui has shown plenty of ability. He has published a quantity of songs of which several volumes have been issued in France, such as the *Douze Mélodies*, *Vignettes musicales*, 20 *Poèmes de*



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*Jean Richepin*, all of which contain interesting numbers. In the collection *Douze Mélodies* one might single out for mention "Je vous aimais," "Te souvient-il encore?" "Ma mignonne"; in the *Poèmes de Jean Richepin* three equally good songs are "Les Deux Ménétriers" and, above all, "Les Songeants" and "Les Petiots." They are not always simple; they are sometimes elaborate and even over-elaborate; but they contain happy ideas which are both picturesque and original.

Moreover, Cui has written a great deal, not only for the voice but for orchestra and also for the pianoforte and the other instruments. For orchestra there are, amongst other things, a Marche Solennelle; a Petite Suite and three others, and some Circassian Dances which in rhythm and orchestral colouring are very original. For the pianoforte there are, amongst other things, a suite, dedicated to Liszt; four pieces, dedicated to Leschetizky; three waltzes, dedicated to Sophie Menter; two polonaises, dedicated to Anton Rubinstein; three impromptus, dedicated to Hans von Bülow; two sets of twelve and six miniatures; a Valse Bluette; a Valse Caprice, dedicated to Annette Essipov, and a Scherzando Giocoso. For voice there are, besides the songs, an *Ave Maria* for solo voices and female chorus with harmonium, and several

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sets of unaccompanied choruses, some of which, like "Le reveil des oiseaux," "La Vie," and "Nocturne," are very attractive. Then there are a Suite Concertante for violin and orchestra; two pieces for violoncello and orchestra and numerous small instrumental works; and I must not omit to mention an opéra-comique, *The Mandarin's Son*, which I fancy has only been produced privately. Cui also published in 1896 a Study of Russian Song, written in Russian.

After having spoken of César Cui, it is only natural that we should turn our attention to his friend Balakirev, who, as we have seen, was the companion of his youth and shared with him the honour of being the leader and inspirer of the famous "Coterie," which was called by its partisans "The Cohort," and in Russia went under the name of *Kouchka*.

Mily Alexeivich Balakirev, who was born at Nijny-Novgorod on January 2, 1837, is said to have owed the better part of his early musical education to a famous compatriot Alexander Oulibishev, a diplomat who had served his country with distinction while at the same time giving serious attention to music. To him we owe two important works on Mozart and Beethoven, which are worth reading attentively even if one disagrees with their point of view. After having retired into private life, Oulibishev settled down on his estate at

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Nijny-Novgorod, where Balakirev, on his return from the University of Kazan at which he had been studying, had the benefit of his teaching and advice. Balakirev, who had an alert mind and was accustomed to go his own way without being too dependent intellectually on others, no doubt turned his relations with Oulibishev to account in so far as technique rather than musical æsthetics was concerned. Even so, Oulibishev could not have had much influence on Balakirev's temperament and on that strong individuality of his which eventually made itself felt in the clear-cut, narrow theories that he was to propagate and so obstinately defend.

He was barely twenty years old when he went to St. Petersburg, where he took up his abode for the purpose of devoting himself entirely to the serious study of music. It was there that he made the acquaintance of Glinka, who showed himself very friendly towards him, and his intimacy with Cui dated from that time. He and Cui worked together at music, and from their daily discussion of its problems ensued that body of doctrines and of singularly uncompromising principles which both men soon endeavoured to disseminate as much by precept as by persuasion.

Balakirev was, moreover, endowed with remarkable energy and vitality. He became a



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very able pianist, and in 1862 he conducted in person at St. Petersburg some concerts which he had organised with the object of making known the works of the members of "The Cohort." At the same time he threw himself keenly into the study of Russian folk-music, in order to try to assimilate its peculiar character, and published in 1866 an admirable collection of forty folk-songs. Shortly afterwards the Russian Musical Society recognized his unusual gifts as a conductor, and asked him to be responsible for their orchestral concerts. Subsequently Balakirev became director of the Imperial Chapel, but was obliged by ill-health to retire from the post after a few years. He was attacked by a sort of religious mania, and having become a recluse, is said to have broken off relations with Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov, and his other friends and pupils of old days. He died at St. Petersburg in June, 1910.

In spite of his previously busy life, Balakirev wrote comparatively little music. The following is a fairly complete list of his compositions: A symphony; an overture on three Russian themes; an overture on the theme of a Spanish march; *Tamara*, a symphonic poem based on some verses by Lermontov; *Russia*, a symphonic poem; an overture, march, and four *entr'actes* for *King Lear*; *Islamey*, an

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oriental phantasia for pianoforte, and several mazurkas and miscellaneous pieces for the same instrument, as well as a set of folk-tunes arranged for four hands; and finally, some thirty songs with a marked individuality of their own. That is all.

Fertility is clearly not one of Balakirev's distinguishing characteristics, and it will be noticed that he did not come into contact with the theatre except more or less accidentally with his music for *King Lear*, which is quite interesting in its way. He did, however, begin an opera which was called *The Golden Bird*, but for some reason, of which I am not aware, he abandoned it. In France we are hardly in a position to judge of Balakirev as a composer, seeing that he is practically unknown except by his symphonic poem *Tamara*, about which opinion is very much divided, some ranking it extravagantly high, while others unduly depreciate it; in any case, the performance of this much-discussed work at our orchestral concerts has produced results which are little more than negative.

Balakirev was skilful at arrangements and made good pianoforte transcriptions of Glinka's *Jota Aragonese*, of Berlioz's overtures *La fuite en Egypte* and *Harold on Italie* (the latter for four hands) and of one of Beethoven's string quartets, this being for two pianofortes. As

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for the interesting collection of forty folk-songs, the following analysis and appreciation of the volume was written by his friend, César Cui, who is prepared to rank Balakirev as the chief Russian composer ; which seems perhaps excessive when one remembers Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. "The collection is a very remarkable one," he writes, "and of all those that have hitherto been made, it is indisputably the best. It only contains forty songs, but they have all been very carefully chosen, and all are correctly noted down and skilfully harmonized. From beginning to end the pianoforte accompaniment keeps its essentially Russian character, and is so varied and so perfectly adapted to the different tunes in the volume that each of these songs, taken separately, in its miniature fame, is in itself a real work of art. This method of treating national folk-tunes has found imitators, amongst whom may be mentioned Prokounin and, above all, Rimsky-Korsakov, whose collection of a hundred Russian folk-songs has recently been published<sup>1</sup> at St. Petersburg."

I will quote, by way of illustration, Cui's general summing-up on his friend's musical gifts and personality :—

"Balakirev, who is in the front rank of

<sup>1</sup> This was in 1876.



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composers (and is a very severe critic of his own works), is thoroughly acquainted as a scholar with the whole of musical literature, ancient and modern; but he is first and foremost a symphonic writer. As far as vocal music is concerned he has only written twenty<sup>1</sup> songs, which have broad, simple melodies with graceful accompaniments, and are often characterized by vehemence and passion. Lyrical feeling predominates in them, for they are the spontaneous expression, in terms of lovely music, of the impulse of the heart. In form Balakirev's songs are the link between those of Glinka and Dargomijsky on the one hand and those of later composers on the other." It does not appear to me, however, that Balakirev, in spite of the esteem in which he is rightly held, occupies a place in Russian music quite commensurate with such high praise. But I may be mistaken about this.

Let us now come to Borodin, who, as we have seen, was considered practically the leader of the Young School and the most gifted member of the whole group.

Alexander Porphyrievich Borodin was born at St. Petersburg on November 12, 1834. "On his father's side," writes one of his biographers, "he was descended from the royal

<sup>1</sup> A book of ten songs published subsequently brings the number up to thirty.

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family of Imeretinsky : that is to say, from the last of the kings of Imeretia, the fairest of those ancient realms of Caucasus, where the flowers of the East blossom in the shadow of the eternal snows. The kings of Imeretia are said to have boasted their descent from David, and to have borne on their coat-of-arms the quarterings of the harp and sling."

Borodin was no more of a professional musician than Cui. He was primarily a distinguished man of science who, after having passed brilliantly out of the Academy of Medicine and Surgery at St. Petersburg, where he studied under Professor Zinin, eventually succeeded his teacher as Professor of Chemistry at the Academy, while at the same time he became a Councillor of State. He contributed to the columns of various Russian and German technical periodicals a number of important papers and memoranda on chemistry which attracted the attention of the scientific world. Nevertheless, as he had a very strong taste for music, he worked at it from the days of his childhood and learned to play the flute, the violoncello, and the pianoforte. Musical theory he hardly acquired at all except by reading and analysing the works of contemporary composers, in the performance of which he used to take a share by playing either the

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pianoforte or the violoncello part at private concerts of chamber-music.

He nevertheless began to compose at an early age, evidently by instinct. He was only thirteen years old when he wrote a concerto for flute and pianoforte, and after that a trio for two violins and violoncello on a theme in *Robert le Diable*, and a little later a scherzo in B minor for pianoforte and string sextet ; none of which has been published. It was mainly from the year 1862 onwards that he began to give himself seriously to composition. He was at that time one of the group of which the other members were Balakirev, Cui, and Moussorgsky, and it was under the influence of the doctrines held by his friends that his musical nationalism began to assert itself. His first symphony in E flat was mainly written about then, though it was only finished some five years later in 1867. This work was produced with a certain amount of success under Balakirev at a concert on January 4, 1869, given by the Russian Musical Society. Encouraged by the result, Borodin thereupon meditated composing an opera, and began to set to music a play by Mey called *The Tsar's Betrothed*. But it was not long before he gave up working at it, though it was by that time fairly well advanced, and he then produced a certain number of songs, one after another :



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“The Sea,” “The Sleeping Beauty” (a ballad of which the pianoforte accompaniment has been admirably orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov), “Dissonance,” “The Queen of the Ocean,” “An Old Song,” and “My Song is Bitter.”

Hermann Laroche, who was at that time musical critic of the *Golos*, when writing in his paper of “The Sleeping Beauty,” gave his opinion of Borodin’s songs in the following terms :—

“The greater part of the song ‘The Sleeping Beauty’ is written directed to be sung *pianissimo*. The composer, no doubt, uses only a small volume of tone because he is discreet and has pity on his audience ; unless, indeed, it is that he is ashamed, like a man speaking in low tones of what he dares not mention aloud. Moreover, one might say that in all his works he endeavours to give the listener some kind of unpleasant sensation. The title of one of his songs, ‘Dissonance,’ seems to be his motto. He always has to introduce a dissonance somewhere, and often several, and it sometimes happens, as it does in this song, that the music consists of nothing else. Only once does he appear to have had another aim, and that is in the string quartet. One day, remembering the amount of cacophony for which he was responsible, he wrote

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in self-justification 'My Song is Bitter.' This mood of penitence, however, soon passed and led to nothing, for last autumn he published through Bessel three new songs which are infested with the same poison. It may sound unlikely, but it is none the less indisputable, that this determined enemy of music is not lacking in ability; for side by side with the unhealthy, shapeless, and extravagant music which is scattered about his works, one may sometimes find passages which harmonically are very rich. It is just possible, after all, that this tendency towards the ugly may be contrary to his innate instinct and may only be the bitter fruit of inadequate musical education." Whatever grain of truth this criticism contains, its unfairness and exaggeration are obvious.

It was about the time when these songs were written that Borodin thought he saw his opportunity of appearing as an operatic composer, under somewhat unusual conditions too. Etienne Gedeonov, who was Director of the Opera and was himself a well-known dramatic author, had written the libretto of a fantastic ballet-opera *Mlada*, which was to admit of sumptuous accessories. Having written it he began to make preparations for staging it, and proposed to have the music for it composed by the four champions of the new school,

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Borodin, César Cui, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. They readily entered into his views, and undertook each to be responsible for an act, while Minkous was to write the whole of the music for the actual ballet. It was Minkous who, when he was in Paris, wrote the music for the ballet *Néméa ou l'Amour vengé*, which was given at the Opera in July 1864; and was the joint-composer with Léo Délibes of the ballet *La Source*, which was given at the same house in November 1866. When he returned to Russia he was made Inspector of the orchestra in the Imperial Theatre of Moscow, and later, in 1871, was appointed Composer of Ballets for the Russian Opera, both of which posts had been left vacant by the death of Cesare Pugni. In this capacity he wrote several ballets, amongst them being *Le Lys* and *Calcabrino*.

All five composers set to work; but whilst they were engaged in it, Gedeonov's enterprise came under a cloud, the theatre changed hands, and very soon there was no longer any question of *Mlada*. One of the five, however, namely Rimsky-Korsakov, did not lose sight of the subject for, as we shall see later, he took it in hand by himself and produced his own *Mlada* in 1892. An interesting point to notice is that after the death of Borodin, whose allotted share in the opera was the fourth act, (the finale of



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which was roughly sketched but not scored,) it was Rimsky-Korsakov once more who undertook to finish and orchestrate this finale, and had it performed and published in this version of his.

In spite of everything, Borodin felt himself drawn towards the theatre. The proof is that after his abortive work on *The Tsar's Betrothed* and the disappointment of *Mlada*, he almost immediately decided, whilst writing a second symphony in B minor (a very remarkable work in many ways, full of vitality and colour), to settle down to work again at an opera. This opera was *Prince Igor*, which was left unfinished and was only produced after his death. His friend, Vladimir Stassov, who became his biographer, furnished him with the scenario of a libretto which he thereupon remodelled and provided with words.

The name of Stassov should not be passed over in silence now that we are dealing with the Group of Five. He deserves a word or two if only because he used his pen on their behalf again and again with savage and uncompromising zeal. He was Director of the department of fine arts at the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg, and chief editor of the paper *The New Times*; and amongst his writings are a monograph on Glinka (1886) and a life of Borodin (1889). Stassov endeavoured to

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spread and to give his sanction to the doctrines of the young Russian school, and took every opportunity of extolling them. He did this with a kind of frenzied energy, without any regard, let alone indulgence, for those who did not share his views. He was violently bellicose and headstrong in his essentially polemical writings, and as his statements were as exaggerated in manner as in matter he obtained a quite special reputation as a critic. To his book on Borodin, moreover, we owe an interesting French volume by Alfred Habets: *Alexandre Borodin, d'après la biographie et la correspondance publiées par M. Vladimir Stassov* (Paris, Fischbacher, 1893). Habet's book appeared in an English version as *Borodin and Liszt, by Alfred Habets, translated with a Preface by Rosa Newmarch* (London: Digby, Long & Co., 1893). Stassov died at St. Petersburg in November 1906, at the age of eighty-two.

The subject of *Prince Igor*, which recalls a legendary epoch in Russian history, was taken from a national poem, *The Epic of Igor's Army*. The author of this epic (whose identity is still in dispute) described the principal episodes in an expedition of Russian princes against the Polovtsy, a nomad tribe of similar origin to the Turks, who had invaded the Russian dominions towards the middle of the twelfth century. In his admirable book on the Russian Novel

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Melchior de Voguë writes as follows of this heroic saga :—

“ Rising above the popular poetry of the Middle Ages we see an ancient literary monument—the prototype of all the others of that time—*The Story of Igor’s Army*. This epic symbolises and celebrates the Russians’ struggle with the Polovtsy, the pagan hordes of the south-east, just as the *Song of Roland* celebrates that of the French with the Moors. The anonymous poet who sings of Igor is just a little later than our Théroulde, and can dispute his claim to a share of the heritage of Homer.”

This subject, which was very dear to the heart of a Russian audience, was unfortunately treated in a somewhat clumsy fashion which did not bring out its dramatic possibilities on the stage. However, its heroic and picturesque incidents afforded the composer an opportunity of using brilliant colours and striking contrasts and, above all, of giving a profoundly national character to his work.

But at this point Borodin’s musical temperament brought him into conflict with the theories of his friends of the Invincible Band. We have proof of this in his very interesting correspondence, which not only gives us information about his ideas on music, but also shows the man himself in a most favourable



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light as a scholar, in whom delicacy of mind, nobility of heart, conscientiousness and goodness, combined to win the sympathy of all who knew him. I will quote in illustration a single fragment of a letter addressed to his friend Mme. Karmalina, in which he enumerates the reasons which prevented him from indulging his passion for music to the extent that he could have desired :—

“ As a composer I wish to remain *incognito*, and am annoyed at having to acknowledge my musical work. It is only natural. Music, for my friends, is the main thing, the principal occupation of their life, the end for which they live. For me it is a rest and a pastime which distract me from the absorbing duties that tie me to a professorial chair. I do not take Cui, for instance, as my model. I love my profession and my science ; I love the Academy of Medicine and my pupils. The teaching I give is practical in character, and this by itself takes up much of my time. I have to keep in constant touch with both the men and women students, because young people’s work requires close supervision. I have the interests of the Academy at heart. If, on the one hand, I want to finish my musical work, on the other I am afraid to devote too constant an attention to it lest it should react unfavourably on my scientific studies.” Boro-

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din, I should add, was one of the most ardent advocates of the admission of women to higher education, and with Professor Rudniev and Mme. Tarnovskaya founded the School of Medicine for Women at St. Petersburg, where he taught chemistry from 1872 onwards and actively identified himself with its interests until the day of his death.

But to return to the want of agreement, to which I have referred, between Borodin's theories as to what should constitute operatic music and the theories of his friends. I will quote his correspondence once more. "It is to be noticed," he writes, "that in so far as music for the theatre is concerned, I have always been in opposition to the majority of my friends. Recitative is neither in my nature nor in my character. I manage to handle it fairly well, if I am to believe some of my critics; nevertheless I am far more attracted by melody and cantilena. I am more and more drawn to definite, concrete forms." This is quite categorical, and is a very long cry from the doctrines extolled by César Cui. The score, then, of *Prince Igor*, so far from being conceived in the form of Dargomijsky's *Store Guest*, which Cui so much admired, is cut up into clearly defined sections: that is to say into airs, cavatinas, duets, trios, and so forth. This, of course, does not detract from

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its strongly national character any more than it does in the case of *A Life for the Tsar*.

It is a little difficult, however, to form a perfectly exact estimate of Borodin's gifts as an operatic composer from *Prince Igor* alone, because the score was far from complete when the composer died, and, as I have already explained, it had to be revised and finished by Rimsky-Korsakov, with the co-operation of his pupil Glazounov, who was then one of the most promising of the younger Russian writers. Borodin had only written the music of the prologue and the two first acts in their entirety. With the help of his sketches Rimsky-Korsakov was able to revise part of the second act and put together the whole of the fourth, while Glazounov wrote out the overture from memory (having often heard Borodin play it) and scored it, along with the entire third act, including the magnificent Polovtsian march with which it opens. In any case one can point to many beautiful passages in the sections which we owe to Borodin alone: amongst others, to Vladimir's lovely cavatina, to a duet that is quiet yet passionate in character, and to several effective choruses: that of the young Polovtsian girls, for instance, which is exceedingly graceful, or that of the peasants, which is sung unaccompanied, or again the one beginning "Descends des cieux



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bleus," which is an exquisite thing. But above all, one must rank on the same high level the ballet music with chorus, which is entirely new in manner and strikingly Eastern in character. These charming and brilliant dance tunes are rich in colour and varied movement, and are exceedingly original both in melody and rhythm. The orchestration too, in which the percussion instruments are given an unusually important part to play, is astonishingly vivid and picturesque ; the kettle-drum, side-drum, bass-drum, cymbals, triangle, and tambourine being used both singly and in combination. It goes without saying that all the rest of the instruments take part in this gay and riotous orgy of sound, the effect of which is quite enchanting, as the whole thing is done with exquisite skill and tact.

The music of *Prince Igor* is undoubtedly very Russian in character, and it is this national flavour in the music that has kept the work in the repertory, in spite of the weakness of the libretto, for not many years ago it was revived with great success at St. Petersburg, and since then it has been given both in Paris and in London. Borodin, feeling this no doubt himself, said : "*Prince Igor* is essentially a national opera, which can only be of interest to us Russians, who like to refresh our patriotism at the fountain-head of our history,

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and to see the origins of our nationality revived upon the stage." The first performance of the opera was given at St. Petersburg in November 1890, three years after the composer's death, with Mmes. Olguina and Slavina, and Mm. Melnikov, Vassiliev, Ougrinovich and Stravinsky in the cast. The score has been published by Belaiev with the text in Russian, German, and French, the translations being the work of Mme. Alexandrev and Jules Ruelle respectively.

Borodin's skill in handling the orchestra does not need further proof than the ballet music which I have mentioned. It is also apparent once more in the very interesting symphonic sketch to which he gave the title, *In the Steppes of Central Asia*. Incidentally this work illustrates the leaning towards programme music which is noticeable in Russian composers. The taste for it was inherited from Liszt and Berlioz, their favourite models, and after having been shared by Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, is seen once more in Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazounov, Arensky and others. Borodin's symphonic sketch, which is intensely poetical and sad in mood, is original from the point of view of form, and is scored in a very interesting way. The piece was originally intended for a performance of Living Pictures, which was to have taken place in

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the theatre at St. Petersburg on the occasion of the Emperor Alexander II's silver jubilee, when there was to be a series representing different episodes in Russian history. The composer himself wrote out the following programme for it :

“In the silence of the sandy steppes of Central Asia resounds the opening burden of a quiet Russian folk-song. The melancholy sound of an Eastern melody and the approaching steps of horses and camels are also heard. A caravan, accompanied by Russian soldiers, crosses the wide expanse of desert and continues its long journey without fear, trusting confidently to the protection of its military escort. The caravan winds on and on, the native song and that of the Russians blending harmoniously and being audible across the waste, until at last they die away in the distance.”

Borodin, indeed, distinctly occupies a prominent place in the history of modern Russian music. Without exaggerating his importance, one can say that he provides a personal note and, above all, one which is characteristic of his country and his race. As a musician he had a complex, subtle mind ; in his harmonies he was delicate, refined and bold, and was not afraid to assault the ears of the audiences of his day ; he was a skilful contrapuntist ; and he handled the orchestra with distinction. His



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weakness, such as it was, lay in a certain absence of unity in conception and in a lack, which is occasionally noticeable, of calmness and simplicity in all the nervous vigour he has at command.

In addition to the works which I have already mentioned there are two beautiful string quartets: one in A major, on a theme from the finale of Beethoven's quartet of 130, and one in D major, with an exceptionally attractive and original third movement, entitled "Nocturne"; as well as two movements contributed to string quartets written in collaboration with others. Then there is the unfinished third symphony, which was completed by Glazounov; a scherzo for orchestra; several vocal works, which include songs and a humorous *Sérenade de quatre galants à une dame* for male-voice quartet; and finally a Petite Suite for pianoforte solo and three movements contributed to *The Paraphrases*—the set of twenty-four variations and fourteen tiny pieces on what is known in Germany as the "Coteletten Polka," and in England as the "Chopsticks."

Borodin's death was almost tragic. It was the last day of the carnival of 1887, and he had invited a number of friends to an evening party at his house. He was busy entertaining them with his usual sunny hospitality, and being in high spirits he did not wait to be

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asked to take part in the dancing. He also sang and played over to his guests fragments of the third symphony on the pianoforte. Then, just as he had entered on an animated conversation, he was suddenly seen to turn pale, stagger, and fall backwards before anybody had time to prevent him. They hurriedly gathered round him, picked him up . . . and he was dead.

If Borodin can be called a master of technique one cannot say the same of Moussorgsky, that strange, incomplete composer, musically only half-educated, who was clumsy in the expression of his ideas from sheer lack of knowledge, but was endowed with a singularly rich melodic sense, and was profoundly original with a striking individuality of his own.

Modeste Petrovich Moussorgsky was born at Karevo, in the government of Pskov, on March 28, 1839. He studied music from early childhood, and when quite young was given lessons by a pianist of the name of Herke, who is said to have been an excellent teacher. But his independence of character and his versatility prevented him from submitting to the discipline and rules of an art which, after all, has to be respected if one is going to practise it seriously. Moussorgsky evidently had a profound contempt for rules or discipline of any sort.

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His life, which was ruined by drinking and other excesses, was that of a bohemian whose passions and extravagant love of freedom knew no kind of restraint. When he was thirteen years old he was admitted to the Military School for Ensigns at St. Petersburg, which he left as an officer at the age of seventeen, when he was gazetted to a regiment in the Preobrajensky Guards ; but being unable to endure the precision and regularity of a military life he left the army after three years. However, as he was not rich, he had to find a livelihood. After having frittered away several years, which he passed partly in the country, partly at his mother's, and partly with his brother and sister-in-law, he began by undertaking some dull translating work, and eventually accepted a government post in the department of Civil Engineering, which however he shortly resigned. This was in 1868. But, faced once more with poverty, he obtained employment again under the government, in spite of the none too pleasant recollections he had of his former administrative work. This time he went into the department of Woods and Forests, a branch of the Ministry of the Interior, and there, moving perpetually from one office to another and always being dissatisfied, he passed on to the Excise Office, after which he determined to be quit of official



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employment for good, and resigned his post in 1879, in order to accompany the famous singer Mme. Leonova on a long musical tour in Southern Russia and the East. Moussorgsky's health was by this time undermined by poverty, illness, and debauch, and on March 28, 1881, this extraordinary man with his keen intelligence and strong instinct for music, died whilst still in the flower of his youth, on the very day on which he was to cross the threshold of his forty-third year.

It goes without saying that throughout this adventurous and desultory career, Moussorgsky was continuously occupied with music. When quite a young man he was brought by accident into contact with Borodin. He met him again not long afterwards and, like him, became a member of the *Coterie of Five*, of which Cui and Balakirev were the original founders. But whatever society he belonged to, he always remained essentially an Independent. If he has a place apart from the Russian composers of his time, as we are told that he had; if in his isolation he escaped from all other influences and displayed audacity of every sort; it was not so much because he had a specially artistic temperament, as that, by continuing deliberately to ignore the principles and even what may be called the orthography of music, he became unconscious of the

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liberties he was taking and simply put down his ideas as they entered his head, without troubling to give them any particular kind of form. In this respect one might compare the productions of Moussorgsky to those of some of our latter-day poets. Still, there is no denying the superb flashes of genius in the case of the Russian composer whose songs, however strange and shapeless they may seem, often have an expressiveness and a dramatic intensity the force of which must be universally recognized. It would be rank injustice to pretend that when Moussorgsky spoke he had nothing to say ; the misfortune was that he was too often content to stammer.

Strictly speaking, Moussorgsky was not a musician ; he was what Berlioz has been sometimes called—a poet using musical material ; only in this case the distinction was more acute, seeing that the musical material was singularly limited. His education was so incomplete that he did not know how to set down his ideas in a way to do them justice, or even how to give shape to a simple melody for the voice. His songs are mere sketches ; they have no logical development, and as often as not they come inexplicably to a sudden stop before they have barely begun. On the other hand the musical ideas have a strongly original flavour of their own, and frequently show an

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exquisite feeling for poetry and an astonishingly powerful sense of drama ; they are indeed real heart-cries of moving and often tragic intensity.

I spoke just now of Moussorgsky's independence, and of the various shifts to which he was put by his difficulty in expressing his thoughts. This can be illustrated by the first of the *Nursery* set, in which the time is changed (from 7-4 to 3-4, 5-4, 6-4, and so on) no less than twenty-seven times in fifty-three bars. What rhythmical sense can that make, or what musical figure can you get from it ? And as far as rhythm goes Moussorgsky had trouble to write correctly. For instance, in the original edition of this song the forty-fourth bar is in 6-4 time (which is only an expansion of 6-8) and consists of a crochet, a crotchet rest, a minim rest and a minim, as though it were in 3-2 time. There are many other similar mistakes.

What am I to say about his pianoforte music ? Can one really give it the name of music ? I pick up the collection of pieces called *Pictures in an Exhibition*, and endeavour to understand them, but without success. The music has not sense, shape, or colour ; one cannot make head or tail of it. The notes seem to be written deliberately without any kind of coherent plan or sequence, just as they



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happen to come, in a sort of wild improvisation. These are not mere sketches, be it noted, but eccentric ramblings which no real musician would have ventured to put in that form before the public. I do not know what the out-and-out admirers of Moussorgsky will think of me if they read this, but I am bound to declare that in my opinion some of these pieces lie outside the pale of music and cannot be considered as such.

If I am told that Moussorgsky has nevertheless written important works, and that he even took the theatre by storm, I shall reply that he was not so very successful there, and that moreover he was only able to make his music fit for performance when others had taken the trouble to correct it and to set it upon its legs, if I may use the phrase. That is what Rimsky-Korsakov, amongst others, did for it. After all, inspiration, of which, as I have said, Moussorgsky had plenty, is not everything ; one must also know how to make use of it. In the case of a complex work on a large scale, it is not enough to spin a few lovely tunes out of one's head, or even to utter cries of passion and anguish ; one must be able to co-ordinate and present one's ideas ; one must dress them and give them shape so that they stand out in relief. It is no use hurling contemptuous sarcasms on such criticism, as

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has been done by an enthusiastic biographer<sup>1</sup> of Moussorgsky, Pierre d'Alheim, who cannot find abuse enough for those who are unwilling to kneel, like him, before the genius. This writer excuses Moussorgsky's mistakes in the following words: "He did not want to increase his means of expression; he simply tried to translate into sound the soul's cries which struck upon his ears from without or rose from within himself. In very truth he trampled on the rules and crushed the life out of them by the sheer weight of his thought." That may be. Nevertheless, if someone wishes to trample underfoot the laws of a language in such a way as not only to be excused but even to win admiration, he must know the laws first and also the language he wants to use. This is what the great composers—Rameau, Beethoven, Wagner, for instance—took care to do. As to Moussorgsky, he was ignorant of the language of music, and the mistakes he made are not the mistakes of genius but of ignorance. If you want to write verse and have no knowledge of orthography, syntax, or metre, you will not be able to produce anything better than a literary monstrosity, however much poetry you may have in you. This

<sup>1</sup> A more recent French biography is that of M. D. Calvocoressi in the series *Les Maîtres de la Musique* (Paris, Alcan, 2nd ed., 1911).

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was the position Moussorgsky was in. He knew nothing of musical orthography or syntax, and consequently could only produce works which were wanting in form and finish.

I once wrote in a similar strain to one of my friends in St. Petersburg, telling him exactly what I thought of Moussorgsky, and saying that in my opinion he was musically illiterate. He replied as follows :—

“What you say of Moussorgsky could not be fairer, and it explains why he is unrecognizable in the posthumous works which have been corrected and revised by Rimsky-Korsakov, in whom the sense of form is very strong. This has happened in the case of *A Night on the Bare Mountain*, *Khovanstchina*, and the choral works. Rimsky has also just rearranged his opera *Boris Godounov*, and this new version is to be given this winter by a company of amateurs. (It was actually produced in December 1896.) Some have spoken of the popular character of this composer’s music, but anyone who has closely looked into the matter knows that not a single musical thought of Moussorgsky has become or can become part of the people’s heritage, and that when his ideas clarify themselves and begin to look attractive, it is because they are drawn from the people’s muse itself or have been inspired by the essentially Russian style of Glinka. Everything is strange and



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formless except what has been tidied up and straightened out by Rimsky-Korsakov.”

There is no doubt that Moussorgsky was exceptionally gifted, and he might have acquired a great reputation in his lifetime had he only consented to work and familiarize himself with the practice of his art. The constant interest which Rimsky-Korsakov showed in him would obviously not have been addressed to a man of merely ordinary intellectual gifts ; moreover one can see that Moussorgsky had a poet's mind. But he was too much inclined to suppose that imagination alone is sufficient for a poet, and besides being blindly confident in himself, he was too contemptuous of technique and of all who took the trouble to acquire it.

In illustration of this I quote the following words attributed to him by his biographer Pierre d'Alheim, who thought, I suppose, that he was doing a service to the memory of his hero by thus exposing his critical faculties. The context is Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre* :—

“ What is M. Saint-Saëns's practice ? He takes down a tiny miniature from the wall, and puts it into an enormous frame. He gets hold of a few trivial ideas and then drowns them in a gulf of orchestration. He calls that a *Danse Macabre*. M. Saint-Saëns has thought

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fit to compare this sentimental miniature of his to Liszt's *Dies Iræ* with its sense of oppression and anguish. No : it's not 'music,' words, the painter's palette, or the sculptor's chisel that we are in want of—the deuce take the whole lot of these gentry with their foolish ways and their fine words. Give us, instead, some ideas that are alive, talk to us in speech that is alive, no matter what subject you choose to deal with ! You won't take anybody in with all those pretty sounds. You have about as much importance as a pretty woman gracefully offering a bag of sweets to one of her gentleman friends ! You are a king of the orchestra, M. Saint-Saëns, but you produce nothing but trios, quartets, quintets, and so on up the whole arithmetical scale ! M. Saint-Saëns an innovator ? I deny it with every ounce of brain I have ; with the energy of every heart-throb I declare I don't believe it ! What are we to do with this tiresome miniature-framer ? ” I need not insist any further.

An example has already been given to show how ignorant Moussorgsky was of musical notation ; it would be easy to prove that his knowledge of harmony was not much deeper. And if anyone should think that I am exaggerating when I speak in this way, he has only to turn to César Cui, who was certainly not paid to be severe on one of the members of the

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Band. Nevertheless this is how Cui expressed himself on the subject of Moussorgsky, while he was still living too :—

“This highly gifted composer appears at times, however odd it may seem to say so, not to be altogether musical, or, at any rate, not to belong to the category of sensitive musical beings. In fact, very wide gaps are to be found in him, side by side with a number of fine qualities. Symphonic form is altogether alien to Moussorgsky, who is not at all at home in working out or developing a musical situation. His modulations are too free, and sometimes one might say that they only proceed on the lines of pure chance. When he harmonizes a melody, he cannot give the requisite continuity to the laying out of the parts, and these parts, as he writes them, often look quite impossible and unnatural, and produce harmonies which only fall to pieces, and chords which are intolerably harsh. The critical instinct and the sense of beauty were not always revealed to his understanding, and his gifts assume a character of astounding wildness, which brooks no kind of restraint. And yet all these impetuous digressions and extravagant outbursts are the signs of an abundant and vigorous vitality, and give Moussorgsky an entirely original character of his own.” It would be difficult to state



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a composer's technical ignorance more precisely.

In point of fact, Moussorgsky's music was only fit for public performance, as I have said, after a friendly and experienced hand had taken the trouble to revise and correct it. In 1866 he wrote the symphonic work, *A Night on the Bare Mountain*, mentioned above, which was performed at St. Petersburg for the first time in 1886 (that is five years after his death), when Rimsky-Korsakov had re-orchestrated it. It was about the same time that he took in hand the first dramatic work which he completed on a large scale, writing the text as well as the music for it. This was *Boris Godounov*, a five-act opera, the subject of which was suggested to him by his friend Professor Nikolsky and was based on a tragedy by Poushkin. He had originally begun to compose an opera, *Salammbô*, founded on Flaubert's novel; but he never finished it, and instead, used up various portions of it in *Boris Godounov* and several of his other works. When *Boris* was given for the first time in the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg in 1874, it was not successful because, from the musical point of view, it was not really presentable. It was only in 1896, fifteen years after the death of the composer, that it became popular, when Rimsky had revised and rearranged the score,

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which Moussorgsky, with his vanity and ignorance, was quite incapable of writing in the shape in which we have it to-day.

I should not like it to be thought that in saying this I wish to deny the importance of Moussorgsky as a musical personality. I do not mean to do anything of the sort ; but the fact has to be stated that none of his compositions of any importance were able to win their way until Rimsky-Korsakov had had a hand in them. This is not only the case with *Boris Godounov* ; the same thing happened with his other big five-act opera, *Khovanstchina*, of which he wrote both text and music (basing the text on material supplied by Stassov), and also with *A Night on the Bare Mountain*. If Rimsky went to this trouble, it was because he felt and knew that this extremely uneducated musician was a genius who often had wonderful flights of inspiration. My readers will grant then, I hope, that in writing as I do about Moussorgsky I am not trying to be anything but fair towards him, and that when I say that the score of *Boris Godounov* (which is saturated with intense and characteristic Russian feeling) is very unequal, that does not hinder me from maintaining that it is stamped with the hall-mark of really great work, and that some portions of it are exceptionally beautiful.

If we take the score as it stands now after

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Rimsky's intervention and supervision, one could point to many pages that do honour to the composer. In the first act, for instance, the whole of the scene with the crowd, which is full of life and animation, with the choruses harmonized so as to recall the old Greek modes, is extraordinarily effective. In the second act one would single out the long monologue of Pimen, which has great feeling and obtains much effect from the reiterated figure in the accompaniment; and in the third there is the great scene of the Imperial procession and the coronation of the Tsar, with the shouts of the crowd, the singing of the hymn, and the clashing of the bells. Moussorgsky clearly had a strong sense of moving masses, and there is proof of it again a little further on in the scene of the peasants' revolt in the forest. The interesting song of the nurse in the fifth scene, which makes admirable use of folk-song material, should not be overlooked, and the composer's dramatic instinct comes out in the episode of Boris's vision. What is chiefly remarkable in the score of *Boris Godounov* is its sense of character and its general feeling for colour; in that lies its real originality. As to the orchestration, (which is not symphonic, but is exactly what it ought to be,) if I mention it, I do so in order to compliment Rimsky-Korsakov; for anyone who is familiar with



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Moussorgsky is well aware he was incapable of writing in that way.

In *Boris Godounov*, then, we are confronted with a very interesting work, but one of which we must not exaggerate the importance ; above all we need not hail it as an absolute masterpiece, as some insist on doing. Let us give it the high and honourable place that is due to it without attempting to deceive ourselves.

Moussorgsky, as I have said, wrote another opera, *Khovanstchina*. He did not live to complete it, but Rimsky-Korsakov took it in hand and orchestrated it. Some popular performances were given in February 1886 by the Musical and Dramatic Club of St. Petersburg ; it was then played at Kiev in October 1892, and at a private theatre at St. Petersburg a year later ; and it has recently been revived and played in Paris and London. Though less popular than *Boris Godounov* the music of it is simpler and more lyrical, and more allied to that of conventional opera. In spite of the clumsiness of the libretto, due to radical alterations made at the last minute by the composer when he felt his health giving way, it is not so episodic as the earlier opera ; but the religious and political factions of Russia in the seventeenth century, which form its subject, afford less interesting material to a western audience

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than the stirring story of the unhappy Tsar Boris.

Amongst other works of Moussorgsky which ought to be mentioned are a symphonic Intermezzo (which, of course, had to be rescored by Rimsky-Korsakov before it could be performed), the choral *Defeat of Sennacherib* and *Joshua*, the *Pictures in an Exhibition*, and several small detached pieces for pianoforte; and also the groups of songs, "Without Sunshine," "The Nursery," "Songs and Dances of Death," and a number of single songs to words by Poushkin, Goethe, Heine, Nekrassov, Alexis Tolstoy, Shevshenko, Kolstov, Mey, Golenishtiev-Koutouzov, and Moussorgsky himself. I have spoken of the intensely poetical and dramatic character of some of these songs; there are others (such as "The Peepshow" and "The Seminarist") which are extraordinarily satirical and comic in sentiment. Finally I should add that Moussorgsky sketched the music for a single act of *Mlada* (the composite opera which I mentioned when dealing with Borodin), and that he left fragments of two unfinished operas, *Marriage* and *The Fair at Sorochinsk*, both based on comedy subjects by Gogol.

We now come to the composer who was certainly the most prominent in the little group of reformers, and who without doubt had the highest reputation of any musician in

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Russia since the death of Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky. I mean, of course, Rimsky-Korsakov (now dead himself), whose works seem to me the loftiest and most original in all the modern Russian school.

Nicholas Andreivich Rimsky-Korsakov was born at Tikvin, in the government of Novgorod, on March 18, 1844. He was a hard-working and prolific composer, whose inspiration did not perhaps always keep pace with his output ; but at any rate being exceedingly gifted and having received a sound musical education, he produced work of every sort and kind—dramatic, symphonic, instrumental, vocal and choral. Like so many of his contemporaries, he had first begun to study music as an amateur, and it was only after he had been through the preliminary stages of a naval officer's career that he threw up his post, while still quite young, in order to devote himself wholeheartedly to the indulgence of his taste for music.

It may be taken for granted that Rimsky-Korsakov had even under these conditions acquired, as I have said, a sound training in music, seeing that he was invited in 1871, when he was only twenty-seven years old, to take charge of a class for composition and orchestration at the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg. As he was younger than any of the



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other members of the Group of Five, he had been the last to join them, and at first he naturally enough came under the influence of Balakirev and César Cui, as may easily be seen by looking at his early operas. However, his robust musical temperament saved him from certain exaggerated forms of expression, and, at the same time, his intimate acquaintance with folk-songs and the effective use he made of them in a variety of compositions gave his music a very decided individuality of its own. Then again, it has to be remembered that when he felt sure of his powers and let himself follow the natural bent of his fine musical instinct, he ended by going ahead on his own lines without troubling any more about the principles of his good friends in the Group, which, as we have seen, were only accepted by Borodin too, up to a certain point. The result, as might have been expected, was a somewhat striking change in the composer's manner. A fellow-countryman of Rimsky-Korsakov has quoted to me a pertinent remark of his illustrating this very point. On the occasion of the performance of one of his later operas, the music of which was characterized by remarkably graceful and sincere melodic feeling, someone happened to express in his hearing a mild astonishment at what was a comparatively new feature of his operatic style. "Hah!"

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replied Rimsky, "I've had enough of recitative. I can't stand any more of it!" And there you have César Cui buried with his precious system alongside of him.

In 1873 Rimsky-Korsakov made his first appearance as an operatic composer at the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg, with *The Maid of Pskov*, a work in four acts, the subject of which was taken from a play by the poet Mey. Although this was his first original work for the stage, his name was already associated with it, for on February 28 of the previous year Dargomijsky's unfinished opera, *The Stone Guest*, was produced at the same theatre, after being scored by Rimsky with the skill that always characterized his handling of the orchestra. In *The Maid of Pskov* he made skilful use for the first time of several Russian popular tunes—amongst others of a delightful melody which comes from the district of Arzamos and is to be found as number twenty-seven in Balakirev's collection of folk-songs. This is introduced into the opening scene of the opera. Otherwise the score is not particularly interesting, the recitative being somewhat dry and the harmonization too crude to be generally acceptable. The work was given sixteen times, and was then dropped altogether from the repertory until it reappeared in a revised and considerably improved

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version in April 1895 at the Panaevsky Theatre under the auspices of a private musical society at St. Petersburg. In its new form it was taken up by the Imperial Opera houses at Moscow and St. Petersburg, and under the name of *Ivan the Terrible* was recently given in Paris and London with Shaliapin in the title-rôle, when its picturesque qualities and its powerful dramatic character were highly appreciated.

Eight years passed without anything by Rimsky-Korsakov being produced in the theatre. He was engaged at the time on other works of which I shall have to speak later on ; amongst other things on a string quartet, which won him an honourable mention in a competition organized by the Russian Imperial Musical Society. He also published about this time an excellent collection of a hundred Russian folk-songs, which he had collected and harmonized himself. Then on January 20, 1880, he had his second opera, *A Night in May*, given at the Maryinsky Theatre. In this three-act work, the subject of which was taken from a very popular tale, half-farce half-fantasy, by Nicholas Gogol, the composer struck a new note of humour and liveliness ; the melodic vein too was freer and more abundant than in *The Maid of Pskov*. The first act was graceful and melancholy in



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character, while the second was exuberantly comic and whimsical. The third was undoubtedly of inferior quality; it was also too long, and was only noteworthy for a very attractive Slumber-song. Nevertheless the opera as a whole was well received, and it was admirably played by Mmes. Bichourin, Slavina and Vielinskaya, and Mm. Stravinsky, Lodi, Ende, Melnikov and Sobolev. *A Night in May* was successfully revived in October 1894 at the Mikhailovsky Theatre, and four years later was given at Moscow.

Only two years separate the production of *A Night in May* from another work which is perhaps the best he ever wrote for the stage. This was *The Snow-Maiden* (*Sniegourochka*), a fantastic opera in four acts and a prologue, based on a play by Ostrovsky, for which Tchaikovsky, it will be remembered, had written incidental music some twelve years previously. The fairy and legendary side of the libretto, in which humour and poetry constantly alternate, was precisely of a kind to set free the inspiration of the composer; the result is a score, exquisitely fresh and youthful in feeling, with an originality of mood as well as of form, and a picturesqueness which is not merely romantic but is strongly Russian in character. In fact, taken as a whole, *The Snow-Maiden* is entrancingly beautiful; its only fault, such as it

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is, consists of a slight over-elaboration of some of the development sections, which may be considered the habitually weak spot of Rimsky-Korsakov, and, incidentally, of almost all Russian composers. Many of the individual numbers and episodes might be quoted for the successful way in which they hold the attention and the sympathy of the listener : such, for instance, as the frankly comic scene with the King of Berendey, the delicious episode of the Snow-maiden and her mother on the shores of the lake, and the lovely song of the shepherd Lel (the whole of whose part, like that of the Snow-maiden, is quite charming) ; attention should also be drawn to the astonishing finale of the first act, the prelude to the second, and the whole of the third. Reverie, colour, poetry, passion, humour—all this is to be found in the music ; which does not mean that the musician as such is in any sense in the background. He has not only been inspired to write charming, graceful melodies ; he shows technical knowledge in his use of harmonies which are often full of surprising and new effects, and he proves himself to be an orchestrator of incomparable skill. And here I must make one remark, and that is, that Rimsky-Korsakov in this score has for the first time gone against the rigid principles of the Heap, and has completely repu-

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diated the system of maintaining the absolute continuity of the musical thread. The score of *The Snow-Maiden* is made up entirely of separate numbers which are united by recitatives in accordance with the traditional form of European opera.

The score of *Mlada* has perhaps more breadth. This is the fairy ballet-opera in four acts for which Gedeonov had written the libretto, with the idea of having it set to music by four different composers. The scheme, as readers of the section of this chapter devoted to Borodin will remember, came to nothing. In the end Rimsky-Korsakov composed the whole of the music, and the work was given at the Maryinsky Theatre in November 1892. The subject, which was essentially national, and was partly historical, partly legendary, dealt with an epoch preceding the introduction of Christianity to the Slavonic peoples, and gave a picture of the life of the ancient Slavs on the shores of the Baltic. The work is complex, but very interesting from the musical point of view, and some of the sections—more especially the lovely choruses and ballet-tunes—are exceedingly attractive. The opera taken as a whole is pleasing, picturesque, and poetical; it contains a fund of graceful melody, and in the matter of modulations it shows the hand of a master. For my own part I have



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obtained keen delight from reading the score, which is original both in form and idea, and I regret that I have to record that on the stage it has had practically no success at all.

We now come to *Christmas Eve*, a fantastic opera in four acts and nine scenes, which was produced at the Maryinsky Theatre on December 10, 1895. This time the composer wrote his own libretto, going for his material to a popular short story by Gogol, called "Christmas Eve," which had already been used for three other operas. The first of these was Tchaikovsky's *Vakoula the Smith* (or *Oxana's Caprice*), which was given at the same theatre in 1876; the second, by Soloviev, had some success at a private theatre; the third, set to the dialect of little-Russia by Lissenko, obtained a certain popularity at Kiev and at Kharkov, and for several years a version of this, with the music re-adapted by a little-Russian company to a fairy pantomime (also based on Gogol), was played with success at St. Petersburg. The score of *Christmas Eve* contains some of Rimsky-Korsakov's best work. It does not suffer from the tendency to long-windedness which occasionally detracts from the value of his other operas; on the other hand, there is a certain lack of freedom and spontaneity in the character of its melodies. The ideas are mostly short, and often seem to

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need developing. Moreover the composer in this work returned for the moment to the tiresome principles so often referred to in this chapter, and in his desire to keep steadfastly off the track of traditional opera and to apply himself assiduously to obtaining continuity in the musical thread, allowed the writing at times to become unnecessarily packed and loaded. But all the symphonic part of the opera, which belongs to the fantastic side of the subject, is treated in a masterly way and is as attractive as it is original. Apart from that, several of the separate numbers are worth mentioning : amongst others, two charming songs for tenor and two cavatinas for soprano, one of which is couched in an affecting mood of melancholy. *Christmas Eve*, the cast for which included Mmes. Mravina, Kamensky and Younossova, and Mm. Yershov, Stravinsky, Koriakin, Ougrinovich and Chouprinnikov, was very favourably received by the public.

After *Christmas Eve*, which was, as I have said, given at St. Petersburg, Rimsky-Korsakov had two important works produced at Moscow. The first of these was *Sadko* (January 6, 1898), a legendary opera in seven scenes ; the second was *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* (November 10, 1900), the subject of which was taken from a poem by Poushkin, who furnished material for

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so many Russian composers. The latter seems to have roused little enthusiasm, but *Sadko*, on the other hand, had considerable success not only at Moscow but also at St. Petersburg, where it was staged in 1901.

*The Tsar's Betrothed*, an opera in three acts and four scenes, written to a pathetic poem by Mey, had a still more emphatic and spontaneous success when, after having been first produced at the Private Opera at Moscow in 1899, it was given at the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg in 1902 with Mmes. Adelaïda Bolska, Slavina, Nosilova and Gladkaïa, and Mm. Morskoy, Yakovlev, Serebriakov, Krantshenk and Antonovsky in the cast. In this work, which went the round of the Russian theatres, the composer abandoned to some extent the form of opera habitual to him, as he did in *The Snow-Maiden*, and adopted one more allied to that of Western opera, without, of course, sacrificing the Russian character of his melody. "One might take it for a posthumous work of Glinka," one of my Russian friends wrote to me. However that may be, the score of *The Tsar's Betrothed* is remarkable both in form and in content. The music, which is in the grand style, shows real inspiration, and is superbly orchestrated; not in the manner to which Rimsky-Korsakov has accustomed us in his concert music, where he aims



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at subtlety of rhythm and minute varieties of colour ; but rather with a broad eye for scenic and dramatic effect which has made the scoring rich and always appropriate to the situation, and at the same time has left it sensitive and free from over-elaboration. The strings, and more especially the violins, have a prominent part allotted to them, the effect of which comes out fully in performance, and as I say they are handled with a fine sense of richness and sonority. This is not the place to analyse in detail a work of this sort ; one can only point to a few separate numbers, such as the brilliant overture, the splendid choruses, and the lovely ballet tunes, as being worthy of special attention.

We have not yet done with Rimsky-Korsakov's operatic output, and several other works have to be mentioned. First of all there is *Mozart and Salieri*, a small one-act opera, which is a musical setting of the entire text of a poem by Poushkin dealing with the supposed poisoning of the composer of *Don Giovanni*. This was produced by the Private Opera Company at Moscow in 1898, and since then has been given at one of the court entertainments at the Hermitage and also at other theatres. The score is a little gem, and was a great success, not only for the composer but also for the great bass singer Shaliapin, who

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created the part of Salieri. Then a year later the same operatic company produced *Boyarinya Vera Sheloga*, another one-act opera, which was written to precede *The Maid of Pskov*.

After this came *Servilia*, a work in five acts, which seems to have been quite a failure when it was produced at St. Petersburg in 1902. In this the composer returned to the mistaken methods dear to the Heap, and more particularly to César Cui, and wrote the whole thing entirely in recitative, which the public apparently found a little too tough for digestion. It may perhaps have been somewhat disconcerted by the subject as well; for Rimsky-Korsakov deserted for once the national themes, on which he had hitherto always drawn, and took as his material for this new work a gloomy episode in the history of religious persecution under Nero. He returned, however, to Russian popular legend for his next opera, *Kastchei the Immortal*, which was given in January 1903 at the Solodovnikov Theatre at Moscow by the Private Opera Company. Three other operas remain to be mentioned: *Pan Voyevoda*, which deals with Polish life in the seventeenth century, and was produced at the theatre of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg in October 1904; *The Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden*

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*Fevronia*, which was given at the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg in February 1907; and *The Golden Cock*, which was forbidden by the Censor to be played during the composer's lifetime, and was only produced after his death at the Private Theatre in Moscow in December 1909. It was also given in 1914 in Paris and London in a version arranged by Mm. Diagilev and Fokin, in which the singers sang their parts sitting in tiers round the stage, while the action was mimed by the members of the ballet.

But the theatre, in spite of the number of works which Rimsky-Korsakov wrote for it, was far from absorbing all his energies. It was mainly as a symphonic writer that he first became known to his fellow-countrymen, and he won his early reputation on the strength of his instrumental compositions. The works of his which fall under this heading are considerable from the point of view both of number and importance. First of all there are three symphonies, the third of which (in C minor) was written in 1873 and revised in 1884, while the second, which has the sub-title *Antar*, shows that special and characteristic preoccupation with the picturesque which seems to be an inherent feature of Rimsky-Korsakov's gifts as a composer. It is in fact a symphonic poem written to a psychological



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programme which Rimsky claims to have followed step by step—a proceeding which constitutes the utmost claim on the powers of music when there are no words to help. It is an interesting though uneven work, with powerful, crude harmonies and an intoxicating exuberance of highly-coloured orchestration. One can obtain some idea of it from the following account which was written by César Cui :—

“ The subject is taken from an Oriental story. Antar, a victim to the ingratitude of man, has withdrawn into a desert. There suddenly appears to him a gazelle pursued by a monstrous bird. Antar slays the bird, rescues the gazelle, falls asleep, and in his dream fancies himself transported to a magnificent palace, where he is spellbound by song and dance. The fairy guardian of the palace promises him the three great pleasures of life, and then suddenly he awakes up to find himself in the desert. That is the programme of the first part. It is an admirable specimen of descriptive music. The thin dreary chords suggesting the desert, the graceful bounds of the gazelle, the heavy flight of the horrible bird, expressed by sinister harmonies, and, finally, the voluptuous abandon of the dances—all this is on a high, imaginative plane. Only, the theme of the dances is too brief for

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the scale on which they are written, and has to be repeated too often.

“The second part, ‘The Pleasures of Revenge,’ is full of crude and savage energy which finds forcible utterance in the musical ideas as well as in the orchestration. The third part, ‘The Pleasures of Power,’ consists of a splendid Oriental march, decked out with arabesques which are as attractive as they are novel. The last part, ‘The Pleasures of Love,’ which is the culmination of the whole work, consists of a powerful representation in music of the poetry of passion. It only remains to add that, in order to render the local colour still more striking, Rimsky-Korsakov makes use of three real Arab melodies, and that the theme associated with Antar himself returns in all four parts, in spite of their very diverse character, which gives the symphony great unity.”

Here we see the composer borrowing Wagner’s favourite device, only transferring it to the domain of purely instrumental music. But Wagner’s operatic music too is mainly instrumental music if you come to think of it.

To the three symphonies must be added a Sinfonietta on Russian themes, in A minor ; an overture on Russian themes, in D major ; another overture, *La Pâque russe*, on Russian church-themes ; a fantasia on Serbian themes ;

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a *Capriccio espagnol*; and finally, two symphonic poems, *Sadko* and *Scheherazade* (the latter based on *The Arabian Nights*), and a *Conte féerique* for orchestra.

Several of these works are known in France from having been given at our big orchestral concerts. *The Capriccio espagnol* is a picture on realistic lines, somewhat crude in tone but very interesting, and sometimes very piquant in its orchestration, with riotous combinations of tints that produce quite extraordinary effects. However, I prefer *Scheherezade*, which seems to me a most remarkable work. It is really an orchestral suite, divided by the composer into four sections, each with a different title: "The Sea and Sinbad's Vessel," "The Story of the Calender-Prince," "The Young Prince and Princess," and "The Festival at Bagdad." Each of these four sections has a definite and distinct character of its own, and each shows striking gifts of invention, while the work as a whole is very original and is enhanced by the novel effects of delicate and sparkling orchestration which are the hall-mark of the composer. It is, in fact, not only picturesque music of a high order, but also exceedingly interesting music. It has become familiar of late years in Paris and London owing to its production as a ballet by M. Diaghilev's company.



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In *Sadko* the composer's skill in scoring is pushed to its utmost verge. Here too is a real orgy of strange and unfamiliar sounds ; a weird medley of instrumental noises of an astonishing intensity of colour. It is not always pleasing. The ear would like occasional moments of quiet and repose, and there are unfortunately signs of undue straining after harmonic effects, and above all of a tiresome and somewhat too apparent desire to surprise and disturb the listener. It sounds rather as if it had been done mainly to astonish people. In spite of all this, however, there is so much warmth and vitality in this uncanny music, that one cannot help being amazed at it and admiring the extraordinary virtuosity of a composer, who has such striking effects as these at his command.

It is to be observed that in all this, the characteristics of Russian music with its colour and its strongly personal note play a large part in the conceptions of the composer, who has gone to refresh his ideas at the well-nigh inexhaustible founts of Russian folk-music. Otherwise (and apart from his dramatic music) one might say that Rimsky-Korsakov, in so far as the vexed question of the descriptive possibilities of music is concerned, has, like most other Russian musicians, been much under the influence of Liszt and Berlioz, which

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inevitably leads composers in the direction of excessive orchestration. This school tries to get more out of music than it can give, and deliberately confuses the art of music with the art of painting.

I think, as I have said, that Rimsky-Korsakov's great reputation in Russia was due at first mainly to his symphonic music, in which he was a past master. These compositions of his are, in truth, quite new in character and are full of interest, in spite of certain faults and exaggerations, and above all they are essentially Russian in feeling. He wrote very little actual pianoforte music. In fact there are only a set of variations in the form of a suite (consisting of a valse, intermezzo, scherzo, nocturne, prelude and fugue) on the name B-A-C-H; four Morceaux (impromptu, noveltte, scherzino, etude); three Morceaux (valse, romance, fugue); and six fugues. These works are numbered op. 10, 11, 15 and 17 respectively. But the one piece of his for pianoforte which should be singled out for its strength and beauty, its fine proportions, its freedom from superfluous developments and the interesting and very skilful way in which the composer has succeeded in establishing his design at the beginning and in carrying it through right up to the end, is the splendid concerto in C sharp minor (op. 30), which is

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dedicated to the memory of Liszt. It is worthy of being associated with that noble name, for both in conception and presentation it stands on a really high level, and is calculated in every way to add to Rimsky-Korsakov's reputation.

This does not exhaust the list of Rimsky-Korsakov's compositions. One of his merits, and not the least of them, was that immense capacity for production which is characteristic of strong men—the capacity with which César Cui found fault so bitterly in the case of Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, and on which he rightly congratulated his companion and friend. Rimsky also wrote amongst other things a considerable number of very individual songs; a cantata *Svitezianka* for soprano, tenor, chorus and orchestra; several unaccompanied choruses for male and for female voices, and others for mixed voices with orchestral or pianoforte accompaniment; a serenade for violin and pianoforte, and a concert fantasia on Russian themes for violin and orchestra. In the majority of his works of whatever kind Rimsky-Korsakov has drawn largely from the rich and inexhaustibly varied store of Russian folk-songs and national tunes, with which he was as well acquainted as anyone, from the fact of having himself collected a large number of them. And even when he did not actually



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quote them, he was influenced so much by them and was so steeped in their idiom, that his music acquired a special character, unlike anyone else's, which gave it quite an individual flavour of its own. In this respect he followed the traditions of Glinka, and vigorously pursued the tracks opened out by the great nationalist composer.

In fact, after the death of his two famous predecessors, Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov found himself virtually at the head of the musical movement in Russia. And this was due not only to the number and importance of his compositions, but also to the work done by him as a teacher and to the high position he occupied as Professor at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg. In 1896 he celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his appointment, and during that quarter of a century many pupils passed through his hands, who have since become famous. These include such names as Glazounov, Arensky, Liadov, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Wihtol and Gretchaninov. He died on June 22, 1908. His widow (*née* Nadejda Nicolaievna Pourgold), who survives him, has published an interesting volume of his Memoirs under the title *My Musical Life*. She is an excellent musician herself, and in her youth was a pupil of Dargomijsky, under whom she

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worked hard. She is known as a composer by a pianoforte sonata and a fantasia for orchestra on the subject of a short story by Gogol, *St. John's Eve*, and she has also made several transcriptions of orchestral pieces for pianoforte duet.

I have now done what I can to introduce my readers to the founders and early leaders of the Russian school—the men who by means of their music and their writings, and also I may add by their over-statements, have called attention to the school and helped to give it importance. I propose to bring this essay to a conclusion by considering their pupils and successors. I cannot deal with them in detail. I shall try rather to take a rapid survey of the more modern Russian composers and musicians, and to give as impartial a view as I can of the general condition of music in the country.

I should like, however, before I finish this chapter, to mention the name of a distinguished musician who, although he is not actually Russian by birth, deserves to be spoken of here because he has lived in Russia for over fifty years and has rendered important services to the cause of modern music in which he has played a considerable part. I mean Edward Napravnik, the admirable conductor at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, who was

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born on August 24, 1839, at Beisht, near Königgratz in Bohemia, and after having made a mark as a student at Prague has been established in the Russian capital since 1861. Napravnik, who is a clever organist as well as a first-rate conductor, has acquired a special reputation from the ability with which he has undertaken the performance of the works of Russian composers at the Imperial Opera House. He has had three works of his own produced there: *The Burgers of Nijri-Novgorod*, *Harold*, and *Doubrovsky*, the libretto for the last of these three being the work of Modeste Tchaikovsky, the brother of the composer; and in December 1902 a fourth, and a very successful opera, *Francesca da Rimini*, was given at the theatre of the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg. Napravnik has also written a number of other works, including three symphonies (one with the title of *The Demon*), a pianoforte concerto in A minor, a Russian fantasia for pianoforte and orchestra, two string quartets, a festival march and six national dances for orchestra, as well as two suites and three pieces for violoncello and pianoforte, some songs and dances, and various pianoforte solos. These compositions are remarkably well written, but they are somewhat lacking in vitality and real inspiration. It is mainly by his admirable work as a



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conductor, and by the intelligent and zealous help which he has always given with unstinted loyalty to his fellow-musicians that Napravnik has reached and retained his unique position at St. Petersburg.

## CHAPTER VII

Russian composers of the later generation. Their works, tendencies, and activity.

DURING the last thirty years there has grown up, in the wake of the early founders of the Russian school of music, a whole generation of composers who have shown themselves ready to reap the harvest sown by their predecessors and willing to maintain the reputation of the school untarnished. They may have been a little vague, a little onesided, perhaps, as to the direction in which they should move. Some were inclined to listen to those who advised them to take a hard and fast, uncompromising line ; others were more sensible and realised that it served no purpose to break abruptly with the sane, established traditions of music in the West. But all alike worked hard, with the fixed determination of seeing that the splendid movement, which had done such credit to the country and had roused both the attention and astonishment of musical Europe, should not be allowed to be undermined. Many of these composers, and espe-

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cially the younger men, have proved to be endowed with unusual vitality and have attracted notice owing to the number and importance of the works which they have produced.

The first of the younger generation of composers to be mentioned is Alexander Glazounov, the favourite pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. He was the son of a bookseller, and was born at St. Petersburg on August 10, 1865. When he was nine years old he took his first piano-forte lessons from a teacher of the name of Elenkovsky, under whom he began to familiarise himself with musical theory; and in 1879 he was put under Rimsky-Korsakov, who made him work at fugal counterpoint and instrumentation. He now progressed so rapidly that four years afterwards, when he was barely eighteen, he made his first public appearance with his symphony No. 1, which was such a pronounced success that he decided to devote his future unreservedly to the career of music. He felt, however, that the symphony needed re-scoring, and in the following year, when he was touring in Germany, he had it performed a second time, at Weimar, at one of the concerts of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein. Liszt, who was present at the concert, came up to the young composer, shook him vigorously by the hand, and warmly congratulated him. Encouraged by his success, Glazounov



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did not let the grass grow under his feet, and in 1889 he had his second symphony and the symphonic poem, *Stenka Razin*, produced in Paris and conducted them himself, on the occasion of the Russian concerts which were organised at the Trocadero by the publisher Belaiev during the Universal Exhibition. In 1892 he was appointed second conductor of the Imperial Russian Musical Society, and eight years later he was made Professor at the Conservatoire of St. Petersburg, of which he became director in 1905. His capacity for rapid production is as remarkable as his youthful precocity. The following list of works, most of which are of importance, will testify to his voluminous output :—

Eight symphonies : (No. 1 in E ; No. 2 in F sharp minor ; No. 3 in D ; No. 4 in E flat ; No. 5 in B flat ; No. 6 in C minor ; No. 7 in F ; No. 8 in E flat) ; two overtures on Greek themes from the collection published by Bourgault-Ducoudray, to whom the second is dedicated ; a Carnival Overture, and an *Ouverture Solennelle* ; the symphonic poem *Stenka Razin*, mentioned above, two symphonic pictures, *The Kremlin* and *Spring*, three orchestral fantasias, two of which are called *The Sea* and *The Forest* ; two orchestral serenades, five orchestral suites, including *Scenes de Ballet* and *Chopiniana* ; various marches, poems, elegies, rhapsodies and other short pieces for orchestra ; a string quintet (one of his best works) ; five string quartets (Nos. 1 and 5 in D ; No. 2 in F ; No. 3 the "Quatuor Slave" in G ; No. 4 in A) ; a delightful set of five Novelettes for

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string quartet ; various cantatas and a *Hymn to Poushkin* for female voices ; two pianoforte sonatas and a considerable number of songs, pianoforte pieces, and duets for violin, viola, violoncello, or horn with pianoforte accompaniment.

In all this there is naturally both good grain and chaff ; everything is not of equal value. But apart from the fact that several of the works are on a high level of interest, their number and importance imply an unusual temperament and imaginative power. Moreover, Glazounov is conspicuous for his skilful technique ; he may, indeed, be said to have learned all there is to be learnt about counterpoint, and he orchestrates with striking success and ease. His music was at first somewhat crabbed and thick, and also rather confused, but later on it became lighter and cleaner as the composer improved in his methods of expression and became more sober in his point of view. In his early days he was inclined to follow the steep paths he had seen Balakirev and César Cui pursue, but nowadays, although he has lost little of his Russian temperament, he would range himself rather with Tchaikovsky in his later phases. What he is still lacking in is clearness and simplicity ; he is fond of being complicated, and perhaps the reason why his pianoforte music is inferior to his orchestral is that he tries to

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get too much out of the instrument. But he has plenty of ideas and keen imagination, and is likely to be regarded as one of the chief figures of the modern school. It is a matter for surprise that a composer with as much talent and temperament as he possesses should not have thought of trying his hand at the theatre except in the direction of ballet. Three of his works—*Raymonda*, *Les Saisons*, and *Ruses d'amour*—come into this category, and all have been given at St. Petersburg. In these ballets he has given evidence of that striking skill in orchestration which, for those who know him only in the concert room, can best be illustrated by the sixth symphony, and more particularly by its remarkably interesting finale.

A composer who has had an equally successful career is Anton Stepanovich Arensky, who was born at Nijny-Novgorod on August 11, 1861. He was the son of a doctor, and at a very early age gave indications of his obsession for music, for when he was barely nine years old and still ignorant of all the rules he took it into his head to write an instrumental quartet. He was sent to school at St. Petersburg, and from there he passed into the Conservatoire, where he was a pupil first of all of Johansen the Director, who was a Dane by birth, and then of Rimsky-Korsakov. He left the Conservatoire with the gold medal



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for composition, and at once courted publicity with a symphony and a pianoforte concerto, both of which were given with success at St. Petersburg and Moscow. He was thereupon made Professor of counterpoint at the Moscow Conservatoire, the Director of which at that period was Safonov, the admirable conductor and pianist of the classical school, to whom I shall have to return later. From that time onwards he wrote a great deal of music of varying degrees of merit, and won a reputation more especially at Moscow, where he had an opera, *A Dream on the Volga* (founded on a subject by Ostrovsky, previously used by Tchaikovsky for *The Voyevode*), produced in 1892, and another less important work in 1894. This was *Raphael*, a small one-act opera, which was written for the Congress of Russian Artists. A third opera, *Nal and Damayanti*, was produced in 1897 as well as a ballet, *A Night in Egypt*, from which he arranged an interesting orchestral suite. His compositions also include a second symphony, an admirable pianoforte trio, op. 32, (dedicated to the violoncellist Charles Davidov), which is written in an interesting as well as a skilful way, and has a delightful scherzo ; a pianoforte quintet ; two string quartets ; a fantasia on Russian songs for pianoforte and orchestra ; three suites for the pianoforte, a number of attractive

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pieces for pianoforte solo, several sets of songs, and two cantatas, one of which, *The Fountain of Baktchisarai*, was written to a poem by Poushkin, and was performed at St. Petersburg in 1899 on the occasion of the jubilee of the great national poet. I ought not to omit to add that he also published a collection of a thousand musical examples to serve as a guide to the practical study of harmony.

Arensky, who is seen at his best in chamber compositions and intimate vocal music, chastened the exuberance of his style after a few youthful outbursts. Much of his later writing is allied in manner to that of Tchaikovsky; at the same time the influence of Schumann is manifest in his pianoforte works. This interesting and busy composer succeeded Balakirev as Director of the Imperial Chapel, and held the post until 1901. He died on February 12, 1906.

Another gifted composer is Joseph Wihtol, who was born on July 26, 1863. Like his friend Arensky, he was a pupil of Johansen and Rimsky-Korsakov at the Conservatoire of St. Petersburg, which he left in 1886 with the gold medal; like Arensky, too, he began by writing music that was rather thick and hazy, but later on he clarified and lightened his style. Amongst his compositions for orchestra should be mentioned *La Fête Lhigo*, a symphonic

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picture on Lettish folk-tunes, and a Dramatic Overture which is specially interesting ; another important work is a ballad for voice, chorus, and orchestra, called *The Bard of Beverin*. Then, besides having written a string quartet and edited a collection of ten Lettish folk-songs, he has composed a well-written sonata for pianoforte, a dozen preludes and a fairly large number of characteristic pieces for the same instrument ; he is also the author of a handful of songs to Russian and German words, and a few small works for violin or violoncello with pianoforte accompaniment.

These three composers, Glazounov, Arensky, and Wihtol, were brought up on the principles of the Group of Five and the nationalistic teaching of Rimsky-Korsakov at St. Petersburg, but discarded them to a considerable extent in later years, when they came more or less under the influence of Tchaikovsky, whose eclectic principles were taught at the musical headquarters of Moscow. In both phases they endeavoured to find individual expression for their musical personality. There is another fairly large group of composers who remained faithful to the Nationalistic principles and show talent in what they have written, though many of them are wanting in originality. This group comprises the names of Liadov, Stcherbatchev, Sokolov, Alpheraky, Felix and Sigis-



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mond Blumenfeld, Kopylov, Antipov, Estafiev, Grodsky, Gretchaninov, Scriabin, Liapounov, and Evald. I propose now to pass each of these composers in brief review.

Anatol Constantinovich Liadov, who was born in St. Petersburg on May 12, 1855, and, like Arensky and Wihtol, was a pupil of Johansen and Rimsky-Korsakov, has a considerable output to his credit, but most of his compositions are on a small scale. Among the more important orchestral works are an early scherzo and a mazurka (the latter with the title "Rustic Scene: near an Inn"), a polonaise in memory of Poushkin, another polonaise written for the unveiling of a statue to Rubinstein, and a brilliant orchestral scherzo, *Baba Yaga*. His choral works include a *Hymn to Rubinstein* (to which, as well as to the polonaise, reference has been made in the chapter on Rubinstein), and a setting of the last scene of Schiller's *Braut von Messina*; and for the pianoforte there are a number of slight pieces, amongst which are some charming Arabesques and an attractive set of *Birioulki* (the Russian *Spillikins*). Liadov also wrote some choruses and songs, and edited for the Geographical Society several volumes of Russian folk-songs, three of which are for children. He is an interesting composer, who writes with real distinction, and he now holds a

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professorial chair at the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg.

Nicholas Vladimirovich Stcherbatchev, who was born on August 27, 1853, has written even less for orchestra than Liadov has : a serenade and two Idylls comprising, I fancy, all that he has done in this direction ; but he has composed numerous pianoforte pieces, (amongst which I should mention a delightful series of short pieces, *Féeries et Pantomimes*), as well as songs to texts in Russian and German by Alexis Tolstoy and Heine.

Nicholas Alexandrovich Sokolov, who was born on March 26, 1858, was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov at the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg, and has held the posts of Professor of Harmony there and at the Chapel of the Imperial Choir. He has written a good many interesting compositions, which include a ballet, *The Wild Swans*, a *Don Juan* after Alexis Tolstoy's dramatic poem, as well as an elegy for orchestra and two serenades for strings ; also three string quartets, a variety of works for violin and violoncello with pianoforte accompaniment, numerous choruses both for accompanied and unaccompanied voices, and single songs.

Achille Alpheraky, who was born on July 3, 1866, has written some dozen pianoforte pieces, and this is his sole contribution to instrumental

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music ; but he has also published over sixty songs to words by Poushkin, Alexis Tolstoy, Lermontov, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Goethe, Heine, and others. He ought perhaps to be considered as a dilettante, who composes to amuse himself, rather than as a professional musician.

Alexander Kopylov, who was born on July 14, 1854, and was a pupil of Liadov, has written a symphony and scherzo for orchestra, two string quartets, fugues, and various pieces for pianoforte, several choruses with and without accompaniment, and some songs.

Except for a symphonic allegro for orchestra and three songs, Constantine Antipov, who was born on January 18, 1859, has only published studies and miscellaneous pieces for pianoforte, though there are a good many of these.

Estafiev, who studied at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, has written, amongst other things, an opera, *The Voyevode*, and a *Poème Mélancolique* for orchestra, which has been favourably received by the public.

Sigismond and Felix Blumenfeld (the former born on December 27, 1852, the latter on April 19, 1863) are both well-known pianists and have published a number of works for pianoforte as well as several songs. Felix Blumenfeld has indeed shown himself a pro-



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lific composer, having written not only songs to words by Lermontov, Poushkin, Polonsky, Alexis Tolstoy and Byron, and an *Allegro de Concert* for pianoforte and orchestra, but also a string quartet and a number of small pianoforte pieces, including two *Suites Polonaises*, an *Etude de Concert*, ten *Moments lyriques*, and so on. All this, while not without an interest of its own, is somewhat monotonous and is lacking in character.

Boleslas Grodsky, who was born on October 29, 1865, has published over fifty works, amongst which are several unaccompanied choruses, a few pianoforte pieces and some characteristic pieces for violin and violoncello with pianoforte accompaniment.

Alexander Tikhonovich Gretchaninov, who was born in Moscow on October 13, 1866, studied the pianoforte at the Conservatoire there under Safonov and then went to work at composition under Rimsky-Korsakov at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, which he left with high distinctions in 1893. He has written two symphonies, some attractive unaccompanied choruses and sacred works, and a number of very expressive songs which show several points of affinity with Schubert; as well as two string quartets, various pieces for pianoforte, incidental music to several plays, and a lyrical opera, *Dobrynia Nikitich*, on a

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national subject, which was produced with success in St. Petersburg in 1903.

Alexander Nicholaevich Scriabin, who was born on January 6, 1872, was not only an exceptionally gifted pianist—he was a pupil of Safonov at the Conservatoire at Moscow, and in later years became himself a Professor of pianoforte at that institution—but was also a very interesting composer who showed signs of promise in this direction in his early days. He wrote three symphonies (the third called *The Divine Poem*), two other orchestral works, *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, a pianoforte concerto, a reverie for orchestra, ten pianoforte sonatas and numerous preludes, mazurkas, studies and poems for pianoforte. In the early works the composer's style reminds one frequently of Chopin; in the poems, in *Prometheus*, and in his other later works which have provoked much discussion, Scriabin evolved a new idiom based on a harmonic system of his own to express the mystical programme underlying his music. A colour scheme, controlled by a key-board, is intended to synchronize with the music in *Prometheus*, and in his last work it is said that perfumes, too, are to play a part. He died on April 27, 1915.

Sergius Michaelovich Liapounov, who is also distinguished both as a pianist and as the composer of a number of interesting works,

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was born at Zaroslav on November 30, 1859. He received his early musical education at the Imperial School of Music at Nijny-Novgorod and completed it at the Conservatoire at Moscow; he then went to St. Petersburg, where he came into close contact with Balakirev, by whom he was much influenced, and from 1894 till 1902 he was assistant Director of the Imperial Chapel. The most important of his compositions are a pianoforte concerto, a symphonic poem, *Hashish*, a very interesting and attractive rhapsody in three sections for pianoforte and orchestra, a symphony, and a Solemn Overture on a Russian theme. In addition to this there are numerous studies and mazurkas, as well as a ballade, a polonaise and so forth for pianoforte solo, which show the influence of Liszt and Balakirev, and a valuable collection of 265 folk-songs edited and published by Liapounov for the Geographical Society in 1899.

Victor Ewald, who was born on November 27, 1860, is a well-known violoncellist who has written a quartet and quintet for strings and three pieces for violoncello with pianoforte accompaniment. I should also add to this list the names of Pomazansky, who has written songs and other small works, and Paul Ivanovich Blaramberg, a pupil of Balakirev, who was born on September 14, 1841, and wrote amongst



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other things a symphony and five operas, none of which are of very great musical importance.

Of all the composers whom I have touched on in the preceding paragraphs those who seem to me to be the most accomplished and to have most to say are Liadov, Felix Blumenfeld and Liapounov. The majority, who are primarily composers for the pianoforte, appear to be directly inspired by Chopin, while some are influenced by Schumann; they have not the originality and the characteristically Russian idiom and flavour that one meets with in the work of some of the symphonic and operatic writers. It should be added that these "pianistic" writers persist in aiming at novelty of effect and at complication not only in the modulations and the harmonic side of the music generally, but also in the structure and design. They seem unable to write simply and to realise the value of calm, pure melodic outline; and almost all of them, it is to be noticed, are wanting in a sense of balance and proportion, often writing at interminable length on the basis of a single formula which is maintained unchanged throughout the whole work. In mentioning these somewhat serious faults I do not wish in any way to deny the talent and the technical capacity of any of these composers.

The above reflections remind me of a gene-

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ralization on the modern Russian school, which I once heard expressed by a colleague of mine who is a good judge and is well up in his subject. I was struck both by the precision and the fairness of his opinion which he gave me in the following words :—

“The greater number of the more modern Russian composers seem to be under the influence of Liszt and Berlioz. They are pre-occupied not so much with beauty of form as with the search for the picturesque. In this way they end by being content with cheap effects bordering on the tricks of pure virtuosity, which are to be met with even in the best pages of Liszt. Their compositions often have elements of looseness and disproportion about them, and they are characterized by constant repetitions which give them an air of improvisation. At the same time they contain many striking qualities. When these musicians have made the round of the Romantics, they will come back to the Classics, to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and then they may give us some masterpieces. The Russian school dates from yesterday. Young people always prefer Lucan to Virgil; it is only when they have reached maturity that scholars can discern, appreciate, and love real beauty.” It would be difficult to put the case more deftly and eloquently.

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The composers whose names and works I have mentioned above form a close and ardent group, whose object and desire, above all things, are to emphasize the national characteristics of modern Russian music. If they have sometimes shown a rather childish contempt for what was done before them and, like children, have rejected the results of previous experience, they are united by a common stock of theories and precepts which constitutes the driving force that impels them towards the end they have in view. That is the source of their vitality, and it is precisely this common stock of theories and precepts which justifies the title of "school" being applied to them. It is, of course, inevitable that some should have shown themselves too rigid in their application of certain principles, and that others should have exaggerated them; and some have naturally lost their way at times. But all have been animated with the sacred flame, and all have had that pure, unquenchable faith in the result, which assures success in the long run. More than one, no doubt, has rested by the wayside or has "crept on a broken wing," for all were not equally gifted, and the weaker have naturally seen themselves passed on the road by the stronger. But their work, taken as a whole, is bearing fruit, and the strong and valiant Russian school of to-day provides us with



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an earnest of what the future has in store for us.

I should add that good wishes and good fortune are on its side. Besides having moral encouragement, which indeed has never been wanting, the Russian school found help of a very efficacious and practical kind in the person of a wealthy business man who became its Mæcenas, and who was deterred by no questions of expense from advertising his protégé to the world. This was Mitrophan Petrovich Belaiev, the timber merchant, who was born in 1836, and in 1885 founded the publishing house in Leipzig, on which he spent vast sums of money in printing and propagating under the best possible conditions the compositions of the younger Russian composers of the day. During twenty years Belaiev published, in his sumptuous and tasteful edition, some seven hundred works, not counting arrangements—and since his death in 1904 the publications have been continued. He also founded the Russian Symphony Concerts, at which the works he published were performed, as well as the Quartet Evenings in St. Petersburg, which became a centre for a whole group of composers and players; and it was he who financed the concerts of Russian music which were given at the Trocadero during the Paris exhibition of 1889. Am I not right in saying

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that the younger composers had luck on their side ?

Still, Russian music is not entirely confined to the group of musicians I have mentioned. Besides these there are a fair number of composers in Russia whose names ought not to be forgotten, and there are also some of an earlier generation to whom I should like for the moment to refer.

First, let me recall to memory those great nobles and distinguished dilettantes, who often played or composed themselves and who did so much for the advancement and progress of music in Russia, such as Count Razoumovsky (Beethoven's friend), the Princes Nicholas and George Galitsin, Prince Youssipov, the two Counts Michael and Mathew Vielhorsky, Prince Odversky, Prince Gregory Volkonsky and others. Some even wrote operas and had them produced : Baron Victinghov did so, for instance, under the assumed name of Boris Sheel. I shall have to return to him later on. Other amateurs also might be mentioned for the part they have taken in musical movements and for what they have done by cultivating music for their own private gratification, such as Laskovsky, Asanchevsky, Alexander Taneiev, and Ladyjensky amongst others.

Villebois, who had his opera *Natashka* produced in 1863 at St. Petersburg without much

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success, was one of these amateurs, and was descended from an ancient family whose head is said to have been a brave soldier and a friend of Peter the Great. Besides writing this opera he published an interesting collection of Russian folk-songs. About this time too one comes across the names of several composers whose works were produced in the theatre. There was Kashperov who, after having had two operas, *Maria Tudor* and *Rienzi*, given in Italy, returned to Russia, when his *Tempest* was produced at St. Petersburg in 1867, and was made a Professor at the Conservatoire at Moscow, where he died in 1894. Then there was Santis, a well-known pianist and a pupil of Henselt, whose four-act opera *Fermak* was given at St. Petersburg in 1874. There was also Santis's able pupil, Alexander Famintsin or Famitsin (born at Kaluga on November 5, 1841 ; died at St. Petersburg on June 29, 1896), who was composer, critic, and Professor of Musical History at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, where his operas, *Sardanapalus* and *Uriel Acosta*, were given in 1875 and 1883. He also wrote a Russian rhapsody for violin and orchestra and two string quartets, and, like his teacher, edited some Russian folk-songs. Mme. Valentine Serov, the widow of the composer, herself a clever musician, also wrote an opera on the same subject and with the



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same title, *Uriel Acosta*, which was given with some success at the Court Theatre at Moscow in April 1885.

The celebrated violoncellist, Charles Davidov (born at Goldingen on March 17, 1838; died at Moscow on February 26, 1889), who had a European reputation as a player, did not write for the theatre, but was a voluminous composer in other directions. Besides numerous works for his own instrument he wrote some orchestral suites, several pianoforte quartets and quintets, some pieces for pianoforte solo and a number of expressive songs which have kept their popularity. At the St. Petersburg Conservatoire Davidov was, first of all, Professor of Musical History, then Professor of the violoncello, and eventually the very successful Director. Besides this he was Director of the Russian Imperial Society of Music at St. Petersburg. He also showed remarkable gifts as a conductor, and for many years he gave a number of very successful and popular chamber concerts with Leopold Auer the violinist and the pianist Theodore Leschetizky. Leschetizky, though not a Russian (for he was born of Polish parents at Vienna in 1831), lived for nearly thirty years in St. Petersburg, where he took a prominent part in the musical life of the place not only as a virtuoso and a composer but also as a teacher. One of the most

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gifted of his many pupils during his stay in Russia (where he is remembered to-day as an eminent and hard-working musician) was Mme. Annette Essipov, who acquired a reputation as a pianist all over Europe, and became herself a Professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire. In 1878 Leschetizky returned to Vienna, where he has lived ever since, and where he has turned out numbers of well-known players, including the most famous pianist of our time, Ignaz Paderewsky, who has had such a prodigiously successful career.

To return to the Russian school of composers. Amongst those whose works have been produced in the theatre in more recent days I may mention first the name of Nicholas Soloviev, who was born at Petrozavodsk on April 27, 1846. He was Professor of theory and musical history at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire (where, as a student, he was a pupil of Zarembo, and gained the *Grand Prix* for composition with a cantata, *The Death of Samson*), and was also musical critic for one of the leading newspapers. He made his name as a composer, first of all, with an overture on a Russian theme and a symphonic poem, *Russians and Mongols*. He then wrote two operas: *Vakoula*, (based on Gogol's story of *Christmas Eve*, which Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and several other composers utilized),

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and *A Little House in the District of Colomna*, which he could not get produced. But in November 1885 a third opera, *Cordelia*, was produced, the libretto of which had been taken by Bronnikov from Sardon's fine play, *La Haine*. It was a well-written work, but was lacking in character, and only had a *succès d'estime*. The composer has also to his credit a certain number of expressive songs, and I must not forget to mention that his great friend Serov specially requested him to complete and orchestrate the score of his last opera, *The Power of Evil*, which death prevented him from finishing himself.

Sergius Ivanovich Taneiev, who was born on November 13, 1856, in the government of Vladimir, is a scholarly musician and a remarkably good pianist. He was a pupil of Nicholas Rubinstein for pianoforte and of Tchaikovsky for composition at the Conservatoire at Moscow, of which he was for a short time Director. He first came out as a virtuoso, in which capacity he has had a brilliantly successful career. As a composer he made his early reputation with a set of six string quartets and a symphony. He subsequently had a musical trilogy in eight scenes, *The Oresteia*, on a libretto from Æschylus, given at St. Petersburg in 1895. This was a very sincere and creditable work written in a dig-



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nified style, but it was heavy in form and had not very much character. Four years later a one-act opera, *The Vengeance of Cupid*, was produced. Taneiev is also the author of a very useful book on counterpoint.

Michael Ippolitov-Ivanov, who was born on November 19, 1859, is a distinguished composer who has written several symphonic works, including an overture on a Russian theme, a Sinfonietta, a charming *Suite Caucasienne*, and twelve characteristic pictures for chorus and orchestra, as well as some chamber music, several groups of songs, and a book on *The National Songs of Georgia* (in the Caucasus). He has also composed four operas: *Ruth*, produced in 1887 at Tiflis, where at that time he was Director of the School of Music; *Asra*, produced at Tiflis in 1890; *Assya*, produced at Moscow in 1900, and *Goze el Uma*, a four-act opera which was successfully brought out at the Russian Opera at St. Petersburg in 1910. Originally a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov at St. Petersburg, he seems to have felt the influence of Tchaikovsky's second manner, and, like Sergius Taneiev, is what is known in Russia as an "Occidental" composer, as distinguished from a "Nationalist": that is to say, his music is not stamped with a character that is essentially Russian except in the earlier works

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written under Rimsky's influence. In 1893 he became a Professor at the Moscow Conservatoire and succeeded Safonov in the Directorship of that Institution in 1906, and since 1899 he has been Conductor of the Moscow Private Opera. When the present Tsar came to the throne Ippolitov-Ivanov was commissioned to write the official Coronation Cantata, which was performed with great pomp and ceremony in the Cathedral.

Michael Michaelovich Ivanov, who was born in 1850, has the same surname as the preceding composer but is not related to him. He is himself a composer and a critic on the *New Times*,<sup>1</sup> for in Russia as in France musicians are bitten with the irresistible desire of writing criticism as well as music. His compositions, which are numerous, include a ballet in three acts, *The Vestal Virgin*; three operas, *Princess Zabava*, *The Festival at Potiomkin*, and *An Old Story*, all given at St. Petersburg; a symphony, *A Night in May*; *Savonarola*, a symphonic prologue; a triumphal overture; three orchestral suites; incidental music to *Medea*; a violin concerto, a *Requiem*, an *Ave Maria*, and various songs. He was also commissioned by the municipality of St. Petersburg to write the cantata for the festival commemorating the bicentenary of the capital.

<sup>1</sup> *Novoe Vremya*.

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Boris Sheel (or Victinghov, to give him his real name), was an amateur who was very active as a composer and tried to make himself talked about ; but his works, though numerous, do not rise above the level of a decent mediocrity. Three operas of his have been performed : *The Demon* (1885), *Tamara* (1886), and *Don Juan* ; and two ballets : *The Tulip of Haarlem* (1887), and *Cinderella* (1890). He also wrote another opera, *Judith*, (which has never been given), an oratorio, *John of Damascus*, a symphonic poem, *The Fountain of Baktchisarai*, and other works. He died in 1902.

Jules Bleichmann, who was born in 1868 and died at St. Petersburg in 1910, was another amateur, who composed a *Suite de Ballet* for orchestra, and a considerable number of songs and pianoforte pieces. In 1896 he conducted in person a new sacred work for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra on a larger scale, called *Saint Sebastian*, which was criticised with some severity ; and his opera, *La Princesse lointaine*, based on Edmond Rostand's play of that name, was produced in 1900.

George Kazatchenko, who was born on August 21, 1858, and was at one time a pupil of Johansen and Rimsky-Korsakov at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, is more to be reckoned with than either of the last two



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composers. He has written a good deal: amongst other things a symphony and an Armenian suite for orchestra, a fantasia on Russian themes for violoncello and orchestra, a cantata, *The Roussalka*, some choruses and songs and an opera, *Prince Serebrany*, which was given at St. Petersburg in 1902. Kazatchenko also wrote the official Cantata of Welcome, which was performed in the capital to celebrate the visit of the President of the French Republic in 1897. In this work, as in Tchaikovsky's overture "*1812*," the Russian National Anthem and the *Marseillaise* are skilfully combined.

George Konius (or Conus) was born on September 30, 1862, in Moscow, where he became a pupil of Taneiev and Arensky. He is a clever composer of the school of Tchaikovsky, and those of his works by which he is best known are a ballet, *Daita*, which was produced in his native town in 1896, a violin concerto, some songs, and a variety of well-written pieces for the pianoforte.

Another composer with a far higher reputation, who also belongs to the school of Tchaikovsky, is Sergius Vassilievich Rachmaninov, who was born on April 1, 1873, in the government of Novgorod. He studied first of all at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, and then at that of Moscow where he became a

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pupil of Taneiev and Arensky. He won the gold medal for composition in 1892, and almost immediately undertook an extensive tour across Russia as a pianist, on his return from which he devoted himself assiduously to writing works of his own. Since then he has frequently appeared both in Russia and abroad as a pianist, he has held various posts as conductor, and he has produced numerous compositions of interest and distinction. These include two symphonies; a fantasia, *The Rock*, for orchestra; three pianoforte concertos; a pianoforte trio (written in memory of Tchaikovsky); a sonata for pianoforte and violoncello; two suites for two pianofortes; several sets of short pieces and preludes for pianoforte solo, amongst the latter being the famous prelude in C sharp minor; some songs; a cantata, *Spring*, and finally a charming one-act opera, *Aleko*, which was written on a subject taken from Poushkin's poem, *The Gipsies*, and was produced in Moscow in 1893.

Another interesting pupil of Taneiev and of Ippolitov-Ivanov at the Moscow Conservatoire, where, like Rachmaninov, he won the gold medal for composition, is Reinhold Glière, who was born at Kiev on December 30, 1874. His works include several attractive chamber works (two string quartets, a quintet, and an

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octet); an early symphony; a later symphony, *Ilia Mourometz*, written to a programme with a national legendary subject; and a skilfully orchestrated symphonic poem, *The Sirens*, in which modern French influences are to be traced. He is a musician whose career will be watched with interest.

A composer who writes easily and freshly is Shenck, the author of a symphony, *The Phantoms*, two operettas, *Phryné* and *Hadji-Mourad*, and an attractive ballet, *Blue-Beard*, which was given at St. Petersburg in 1896. And here I may mention the name of the composer, Krotkov, whose Italian opera, *Fiore fatale*, was produced in 1886 and was followed in 1892 by a one-act opera, *The Poet*, which was given in St. Petersburg.

More important than either of these two is Arsene Nicholaevich Korestchenko, who was a pupil of Taneiev and Arensky at the Moscow Conservatoire, where he is now himself a professor. His orchestral works, which are numerous, include a lyric symphony; and besides these there is a considerable amount of vocal and instrumental music; also a ballet, *The Magic Mirror*, and four operas, two of of them being in one act: namely, *The Palace of Ice*, which was played at Moscow in December 1900, and *The Feast during the Plague*, after a poem by Poushkin, which was



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produced at the Court Theatre at Moscow in January 1902.

I must also draw attention to an independent and apparently anarchical composer, Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikov, who was born at Krosnoyarsk in Siberia in 1866, and studied music in Berlin and Vienna. He claims that he has thrown off every kind of influence, so that he may the more easily follow the path he has chosen for himself. According to a biographer: "He wishes to free music from the trammels of definite form and tonality in order that it may be the faithful echo of all the impressions of the soul and of the senses." Rebikov has published several sets of "mélomimiques," "psychological sketches," and miscellaneous pieces for pianoforte with such titles as "Silhouettes," "Parmi Eux," "Dans leur pays," and also a descriptive legend, *The Tale of the Princess and the King of the Frogs*. He has also written some songs, and amongst his works for the stage are a one-act "psychological" opera, *The Christmas Tree*, which was produced at Moscow in 1903, and a later one called *Thea*.

I ought perhaps to give passing mention to Mlle. Kashperov, the niece of the composer whose name occurs earlier in this chapter. She was a skilful pianist who had temperament both as virtuoso and as composer, and

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wrote several interesting works for voice and for pianoforte.

Then there are three composers, all of whom died young, leaving interesting works behind them. The first is Genari Karganov, an Armenian who became a naturalised Russian, was appointed Professor of the pianoforte at the Tiflis School of Music, and died in 1890. He wrote a number of pianoforte works and of songs to Russian words, which may be somewhat faulty in style but have character and individuality. The second is Gregory Lishin, who was a pupil of Soloviev and Rimsky-Korsakov, and died in 1888. He had three not very striking operas produced, *The Gipsies*, *Count Noulin*, and *Don Cesar of Bazan*, and also wrote some symphonic music and the words and music of several songs. The third composer, who died in the flower of his youth, just when he was giving brilliant promise and was writing easily and rapidly, is Vassily Sergeivich Kalinnikov, who was born on January 13, 1866, in the government of Oslov. He studied composition under Blaremburg in Moscow, and his two chief works are the symphonies in G minor and A major, the former of which is a very striking composition and has met with great success in Paris (where it was first given under Winogradsky at the Exhibition in 1900) and other musical centres.

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His other works include an orchestral suite, two symphonic sketches (one called *The Nymphs*, the other *The Cedar and the Palm*), some songs and pianoforte pieces and incidental music to Alexis Tolstoy's play, *Tsar Boris*. He was making preparations for producing his first opera, *The Year 1812*, when death cut short his labours in January 1901.

Amongst the composers who are still quite young must be classed Igor Stravinsky, son of the well-known singer. He was born in 1882 at Oranienbaum, a village near St. Petersburg, and was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. His early compositions include a symphony, some songs, a set of four studies for pianoforte, a *Scherzo Fantastique* and a symphonic fantasia, *Fireworks* (both for orchestra). His later works, which have made him famous, are the three extraordinarily brilliant, vivacious and picturesquely scored ballets, *The Fire-Bird* (1910), *Petroushka* (1911), and *The Crowning of Spring* (1913); and the opera, based on Hans Andersen's fairy-tale, *The Nightingale*, which was produced in London in 1914.

Then there are one or two operatic composers whose names are barely known outside Russia. Hardenwald, for instance, whose *Power of Love*, founded on a story by Tourgeniev, was produced at Kharkov in 1895; Pachulsky,



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whose *Valerie*, (also founded on a story by Tourgeniev), was given in 1896 at Kiev, where he is Director of the Conservatoire; Prince Troubetskoy, whose *Melusine* was produced at Moscow in 1895; and Blaremborg, to whom I have already referred as the author of five operas. The following works may also be mentioned here: *Love Triumphant*, by Gartevel (Moscow, 1895); *The Fountain of Flowers*, by Alexander Fedorov, based on a tale by Poushkin (Ekaterinoslav, 1896); *The Miracle of Roses*, by Peter Sheerck (St. Petersburg, 1913); *Miranda*, by Kasanli (St. Petersburg, 1910); *The Siege of Dubno*, by Sokalsky; and, finally, a tiny opera, *Love's Revenge*, by Alexander Taneiev (a nephew of Sergius Taneiev), who was a friend of Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov, and has continued to write music in spite of the heavy duties of state involved in his having become chief chancellor. This opera was produced before the Court at the Hermitage Theatre in March 1902.

Leopold Godowsky, the distinguished pianist who was born at Wilna in Russian Poland on February 13, 1870, deserves mention for having made some interesting contributions (including a sonata, studies [on Chopin's *Études*, and original studies) to the literature of the pianoforte; and his accomplished fellow-

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artist, Vassily Sapellnikov, has published a few pleasing trifles for the same instrument. It may be added that Hermann Laroche, the well-known critic, wrote some songs and some very uneven incidental music to Alfred de Musset's *Carmosine*; that a clever amateur, Sergius Youferov, composed several sets of songs and some attractive pianoforte pieces; and that Hlavatch, the conductor of the summer orchestral concerts in St. Petersburg, has had several small symphonic works performed. Another conductor who has composed on a larger scale is Nicholas Tcherepnin (born 1866), who was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, and has become known outside Russia for his two charming ballets, *Le Pavillon d'Armide* and *Narcisse*.

I will now conclude this chapter with a list of composers who cannot be treated in detail, but deserve to be recorded in any account of the later phases of Russian music. These are:—

Lissenko (born 1842), who was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov and has written several operas; Catoire (born 1861), who is of French parentage (and betrays it in his music), but took lessons of Liadov in St. Petersburg and now lives in Moscow; Dloussky, who has written songs and, in conjunction with Werani, an operetta, *Madame Sans-Gène*; Toughma-

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lov, Kapry, Kouznetsov ; Vassilenko (born 1872), who was a pupil of Taneiev and Ippolitov-Ivanov, and has come somewhat under French influence just as Akimenko (born 1878) has done in his later pianoforte works ; Juon (born 1872), who is somewhat German in style, like Steinberg, Rimsky-Korsakov's son-in-law (born 1883), who has written two symphonies, and Medtner (born 1879), who was the child of German parents in Moscow, and has written mainly chamber music ; Amani (born 1875), who was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, and is the author of a pianoforte trio and various small pianoforte pieces ; Artsibouchev, who has written small works for pianoforte and for orchestra ; Shtchurovsky, the composer of an opera, *Bogdan-Khmelnit-sky* ; Kadletz, who has had his ballet, *Acis and Galatea*, performed in St. Petersburg ; Zolotarev, Malishevsky, and Spendiarov, all three of whom have written orchestral works as well as chamber music ; and, finally, Starsov, Stolypin, Zybin, Donaourov, Alenev, Demidov and Kolatchevsky, who are more or less amateur composers of songs. In the same category of amateurs must be placed two composers who have recently died : Adolphe Bariansky (died 1900), who, in spite of the claims of a large business, became known for his chamber works and his music for piano-



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forte ; and Baron Vassily de Wrangel, who wrote various songs and pianoforte pieces as well as a one-act opera, *The Broken Marriage*, and a ballet, *The Daughter of the Mikado*, which was performed at St. Petersburg.

## CHAPTER VIII

A general view of the present state of music in Russia.—Musical critics and historians.—Distinguished singers and instrumentalists.—The teaching of music.—The Conservatoires.—Conclusion.

FROM what I have said in the preceding chapter it should be possible to gain some notion of the strength and vitality of the musical movement going on at the present moment in Russia, which, as I have said at the beginning of this essay, is the only country besides France possessing a really national school. This movement has occurred in the domain of theory as well as of actual practice, thanks to the publication of a number of critical and historical works, many of which are of interest and importance. These publications have unfortunately been somewhat sporadic, and they do not supplement each other to any great extent, so that the whole of them if collected would not give a very accurate general survey of the present state of music in Russia or of its origins and development; nevertheless they indicate, more especially of late years, an intellectual activity that is

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altogether praiseworthy and deserving of encouragement. Amongst the many works which have been published I will single out for mention the following :—

R. P. Dmitri Razoumovsky : *Russian Church Music* ; Youry Arnold : *Memoirs* and miscellaneous articles ; Prince Nicholas Youssipov : *History of Music in Russia, Historical and analytical Monograph on the Violin* ; Perepelitsin : *Dictionary of Music, Illustrated History of Music in Russia, Illustrated Historical Album of Music* ; Alexander Famintsin : *On the Structure and Melodies of Russian Folk-songs, The Musical Season, The Ancient Scale of Indo-Chinese Music and its appearance in Russian Folk-song, The Mummers in Russia* ; Alexander Oulibishev : *Life of Mozart, Life of Beethoven* ; Wilhem von Lenz : *Beethoven and his three Manners* ; Platon de Waxel : *Biography of Glinka*, several important works on Russian and Portuguese music, and critical work in the French *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg* extending over a period of seventeen years ; Alexander Roubets : *Biographical Dictionary of Russian Musicians*, of which there were two editions ; Michael Petoukhov : *Systematised Catalogue of the Museum of Musical Instruments in the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, Russian Popular Musical Instruments in the Museum of the Conservatoire* ; César Cui : *Music in Russia* (published in French as *La Musique en Russie*), *Essay on the Development of Russian Song* ; Sacchetti : *History of Music, The Region of Musical Aesthetics, A Historical Chrestomathy of Music, Manual of Musical Theory* ; P. Weimarn : *Life of Glinka* ; Vladimir Michnevich : *Short History of Music in Russia* ; Miropolsky : *Musical Education of the People in Russia and Western Europe* ; Vladimir Stassov : *Life of Berodin, Life of Glinka ; Twenty-five Years of Russian Music* ; P. A. Poelchau : *A Study of*



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*Church Music* ; Gabrilovich : *Musical Almanack*, which appeared for several years ; Nicholas Findeisen : *Life of Glinka*.

To these should be added those works that I have mentioned in the course of this volume and various other writings by Serov, Prince Odoevsky, Sokalsky, Dourov, Rasmadsé, Hermann Laroche, Kashkin, Cheshikin, Trifonov, Khalutin, Mme. Touvygin, and others. As to theoretical works, they have been published in large numbers, and I shall confine myself to mentioning (besides the older books of Huncke, Youry Arnold, and Zarembac) the more recent writings of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Arensky, Conus, Mme. Spassky and Taneiev.

If the musical movement in Russia is remarkable on the creative side, it is less strikingly so from the point of view of interpretation, at any rate so far as opera is concerned. One of my friends in St. Petersburg, whose judgment I have tested sufficiently to trust, wrote to me on this subject a few years ago as follows :—

“ We have had very few first-rate singers in Russia. There was Joséphine Fodor (who was, strictly speaking, of Dutch origin, though she was brought up from the age of fifteen months by her father in St. Petersburg where she married the French actor, Mainvielle), and

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there was Mme. Schoberlechner, who was a Russian; and you know how fine a tenor Ivanov was. Mme. Vorobieva-Petrova, the contralto who created the part of Vanya in *A Life for the Tsar*, had an exceptional voice, and so had Mme. Lavrovsky, while Mme. Leonova was, above all things, a temperamental singer. Petrov, the bass, was an accomplished artist; Melnikov, the baritone, had a prodigious voice but not very much taste, and the same may be said of the tenor Nikolsky; Korsov and Stravinsky, both good actors as well as singers, had perhaps more style than method. Figner, the tenor, now singing, has more taste than voice; so have the baritones Prianishnikov and Tartakov. As a matter of fact, the best singing in Russia is to be heard at the Italian Opera House, which ceased to be a State opera in 1885, but was subsequently reorganized and carried on as a private concern without a subsidy. A Russian singer who has become famous in Italian parts is Mme. Boulychev; and Mme. Litvinne, as you know from having heard her in Paris, is extraordinarily fine in Wagner. A charming and gifted tenor is Sobinov; and Shaliapin, the bass, though he took time to shape, ranks to-day, both for his singing and his acting, amongst the world's greatest operatic artists, one of his chief triumphs being the double

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rôle of Mephistopheles in Gounod's and Boïto's operas."

From this letter one can gather some idea of the condition of things. I shall confine myself therefore simply to recording names of a certain number of singers who have occupied or still occupy a more or less important position in Russian opera. Amongst the tenors are Setov, Orlov, Ende, Komisarjevsky, Michaelov, Preobrajensky, and Yershov ; the baritones include Artemovsky, Khoklov, and Yakovlev, and the basses Vassiliev, Koriakin, Chernov, and Sariotti. Amongst the women singers are Semenova, Mravina, Sionitzkaya, Platonova, Pavlovskaya, Raab, Leschetizky-Friedebourg, Kotchetova, Bichourin, Kartsev-Panaiev, Slavina, Kroutikova, Adelaïde Bolska and Zviaguina. Another great singer of the past—she died in 1896—was Darya Michaelovna Leonova, who created the title-rôle in Serov's opera, *Rogneda*, and was greatly admired by Meyerbeer. Elizabeth Lavrovsky, who left the stage on her marriage with Prince Tsertelev, enjoyed an almost equally high reputation ; like Raab and Bichourin (who died in 1888), she was a pupil of Nissen-Saloman, the splendid Swedish singer who was the star of the Italian opera at St. Petersburg some fifty years ago. Yet another famous singer of those days was Ossim Petrov, the Sousanin in *A Life for the Tsar*,



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who died in 1878. A later operatic singer, who was famous for her superb singing and acting and had a large share in introducing French music to Russian audiences, was Marie de Gorlenko-Dolina. Amongst more recent concert singers who deserve mention are Mmes. Aktzery, Olenin d'Alheim, and Jerebtzova.

As to the Opera-houses in Russia: there are, first of all, the State-supported theatres—the Maryinsky Theatre at St. Petersburg, and the Grand Theatre, Moscow; then at both St. Petersburg and Moscow there are the Popular Theatres where national operas, mainly, are given at cheap prices. Moscow also has Zimin's Private Opera Company (which has succeeded Mamantov's), and there is a similar institution in St. Petersburg; and numerous other operatic organisations have been established in various parts of the country. Many concert societies, too, are now active both in the capitals and the provinces. References have been made in previous chapters to the Imperial Russian Musical Society; but it stands by no means alone in providing orchestral and choral music. For there are the Philharmonic Society's concerts, Belaiev's Russian Symphony concerts and those conducted by Siloti, Vasilenko and Kussevitsky; and a number of popular orchestral concerts are given in St. Petersburg and other centres. There are also

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many organisations for giving chamber music by Russian and foreign composers as well as the concerts provided for by Belaiev.

If Russia has not produced a number of great singers, her record in the matter of instrumental virtuosos leaves nothing to be desired. It would be superfluous, after what I have already written in an earlier chapter, to recall the exploits in this direction of Anton Rubinstein; and some of us have not forgotten the electrical effect produced by his brother Nicholas, who was hardly inferior to him, when his playing, in which vigour and delicacy were so marvellously combined, was heard in 1878 at the Russian concerts given in the Trocadero. The Russian pianoforte school since those days has been noted for its remarkable players, amongst them being Safonov (a pupil of Brassin), Sergius Taneiev (a pupil of Nicholas Rubinstein), Safelnikov, Siloti (a pupil of Liszt), Bentsch, Holliday, Igoumnov, Lavrov, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Doubassov, Joseph Lhevine, and Mmes. Essipov, Timanov (a pupil of Tausig), Bertenson-Voronetz, Benois-Ephron (a pupil of Leschetitzky), Kashperov, Terminsky, Posnansky, Yakimovsky and Drucker (the last three all being pupils of Anton Rubinstein). Amongst the violinists the name of General Lvov (the composer of the Russian National Anthem) deserves to be re-

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called, for he was a very distinguished player, and then that of Leopold Auer, the brilliant solo-violinist to the Court, and Professor at the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, though he is really a Hungarian by birth and is only a naturalized Russian. After these two come Brodsky, Petchnikov (a pupil of Joachim) and his wife, Kolakovsky, Gregorovich, Barciewicz, Elman and Zimbalist. The famous violoncellist Davidov, who died before his time, acquired a European reputation, and his favourite pupil, Verjbilovich, who played with Auer in the quartet concerts organized by the Imperial Russian Musical Society, has also become famous. And I must not omit to mention the names of Zabel, the distinguished harpist who has added to the literature of his instrument, and of Kussevitsky, who is at the same time a fine player on the double-bass and a good conductor.

But neither Kussevitsky nor Rimsky-Korsakov, nor Glazounov, nor Davidov (the nephew of the violoncellist), nor Ippolitov-Ivanov has, I think, proved superior as a conductor to the two Rubinsteins. Safonov alone possesses the true qualifications of a great conductor. He has a perfect understanding of the style and significance of the music which he interprets, and he knows exactly how to control and regulate his own movements ; in his beat he



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combines vigour with clearness, and he is supple while obtaining the finest precision in detail. The whole impression he conveys is one of complete homogeneity and unity. I need not refer again to Napravnik after what I have already said of him at the end of Chapter VI, and I will not do more than mention the names of Galkin and Erdmansdoerfer, who were two other conductors. Arensky also secured a reputation for his conducting of the Moscow Choral Society and the Choir of the Imperial Chapel, that wonderful body of singers of which a critic said not long ago : " I hardly venture to speak of that incomparable choir, which has not its like in all the world : it is positively sublime and superhuman ; it can command every shade of feeling and rise to the dizziest heights."

I must also just mention Theodore Becker and Arkanghelsky, who deserved their reputations as conductors of choirs, being considered in Russia superior even to Dmitri Slaviansky d'Agrenev, who nevertheless made a successful tour all over Europe at the head of a clever and experienced company of singers. His success was due partly to the delicate colouring of the music which was sung, partly to the beautiful details of the performance, and partly also to the fact that d'Agrenev and his choir appeared in the curious and

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picturesque Russian costumes of the sixteenth century. An article in a number of the *Indépendance Belge*, referring to the concerts given in Paris in 1887 by these musicians, contains the following facts about d'Agrenev :—

“He was originally a student at the University of Moscow and then a soldier, but as he could not resist his leanings towards a musical career, he left the army, to study music in France and Italy. He obtained an appointment at the Court of Naples, and was then engaged at Berlin, and eventually at St. Petersburg. He gave up the theatre, however, in order to make researches into Russian music, which was beginning to attract him. He travelled in all the Slav countries, and in this way collected about a thousand Russian and Slavonic poems and tunes, a hundred of which were epic songs in honour of the primitive heroes of the Slavs. He then set about publishing these folk-songs, which he harmonized appropriately and had performed in public, and he also organized a choir to spread a knowledge of them in other countries. He accomplished something which was really patriotic and at the same time very important musically, for it amounted to rediscovering the origins of Russian music and opening up to modern composers the sources in which they need to

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plunge in order to refresh and recreate their musical personality.”

This brings me to the question of musical education, which occupies a prominent place in Russia, though the State takes little official cognizance of it, most of the work accomplished being due to private initiative. The two great Conservatoires of St. Petersburg and Moscow were founded by the brothers Anton and Nicholas Rubinstein respectively. Both are flourishing institutions to-day, that of St. Petersburg having Glazounov as its Director, while at Moscow Ippolitov-Ivanov succeeded Safonov in 1906. These are far from being the only Conservatoires in the country. There are others at Kiev, Odessa, Tiflis, Helsingfors, Kharkov, Riga and so on, to the number, I believe, of about thirty. In order to give an idea of the sort of musical teaching given in one of these big establishments and of the part played in it by the Director, I will quote from my old friend Charles Marie Widor, Professor of Composition in the Conservatoire at Paris, who a few years ago wrote the following account in one of the French papers of a visit which he had recently paid to the Conservatoire at Moscow when on a voyage in Russia :—

“ I should like to tell you about the Conservatoire at Moscow, which I visited last



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week, as it is one of the most flourishing institutions of its sort and is organized on thoroughly practical lines.

“In Russia there is separation between School and State. Neither at St. Petersburg nor at Moscow, nor at Warsaw, nor at Kiev can you read in letters of gold on a background of green marble : *Imperial Conservatoire of Music*, nor will you find the national flag floating above the portals. There is nothing official about the Conservatoires, as there is at Paris, where the Director, the committee of administration, the professors and their staff, are all really State functionaries, depending on Ministerial nomination and receiving their salaries out of the national budget. There is, however, an Imperial Society of Music under the patronage of a Grand duke or duchess, with its headquarters at St. Petersburg, which undertakes the charge of musical interests throughout the whole country and makes grants to the schools in important centres such as St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Kiev, Helsingfors, Tiflis, and so forth. These schools and institutions are quite free and independent of government control ; they retain their purely private character, they dispose of their revenue in their own way, and they perpetuate their constitution themselves.

“Thus the Conservatoire at Moscow, which

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is subsidized both by the town and by the Imperial Society, recently borrowed an enormous sum of money to enable it to complete the splendid new building where it will take up its quarters next year.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the whole of this block has been carried out without the troublesome necessity of submitting to any kind of official intervention. Before ten years have elapsed the loan will have been repaid, thanks to the resources of the institution, which include income from investments, donations, receipts from concerts, and the fees paid for board and lodging by the 460 pupils who attend the classes.

“I was told last year by Professor Johansen, the Director of the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg, that there is no country in Europe where private enterprise has more scope than in Russia. The Moscow Conservatoire is a striking case in point. How long will it be in France before the recommendations of Georges Berger in his financial report on the Fine Arts are carried into effect? When will it be understood that the library at the Paris Conservatoire can no longer contain its books, nor the museum its collection of musical instruments? When will it be realized that in our

<sup>1</sup> This was written in 1900. The Conservatoire was inaugurated in 1901. The Tsar contributed £40,000 towards its construction, and Solodovnikov, a wealthy business man, £20,000.

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dilapidated and confined classrooms, the professors are obliged at regular intervals to stop lecturing, in order to have the windows opened and some fresh air let in, preferring to risk bronchitis rather than be asphyxiated?

“At Moscow, Safonov, the Director, noticed one day that the constant increase in the number of students was making it impossible to continue to do work in the old classrooms. Owing to the trombone class, for instance, (which could be heard from a distance), there was no means of duplicating the harmony class, which had outgrown its requirements, and meanwhile the singing teachers, exasperated by the practising of trumpets in the next room, were threatening to resign. Safonov, without making a fuss, and at the same time without any hesitation, went straight off to find an architect and discuss site, plans, and estimates. Six months later the stone-masons were at work, and in two years' time a superb building was opened with a concert-hall capable of seating an audience of two thousand. This huge hall, containing a fine Cavallé-Coll organ,<sup>1</sup> is 185 feet long, 65 feet wide, and 52 feet high.

“The staff of the Moscow Conservatoire is less numerous than ours, and consists of barely forty professors, for in Russia a pro-

<sup>1</sup> A gift from the banker, Van Der Wies.



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fessor is not forbidden to hold more than one post. The three composition classes, (each devoted to a special branch of study), instead of competing with each other as they do with us, are attended by the same pupils, according as the turn comes for counterpoint, orchestration, or free composition. I counted seven elementary and four advanced classes for pianoforte, three classes for violin and three for singing. Amongst the instruments taught are the kettle-drums, glockenspiel, side-drum and so on, one teacher undertaking all the instruments of percussion. And I should also draw attention to a particularly noteworthy feature of the institution, which is that, side by side with the purely musical instruction there is a whole system of general education which comprises history, geography, arithmetic, grammar, literature, and foreign languages.

“And now I come to the most interesting point about the course of study, and that is the *ensemble* classes. The Director is in charge of these, and he makes himself entirely responsible. The classes for orchestra, chorus, and chamber music are all taken in turn by Safonov himself, each twice a week. ‘On Mondays and Thursdays,’ he told me, ‘I get together my orchestral pupils, sometimes to work at the repertory of old and modern music, with which they all ought to be

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acquainted ; sometimes to let our young composers hear their own works and judge themselves of the progress or the mistakes which they are making ; sometimes, again, to accompany the solo singers and instrumentalists. Besides which I surrender my stick from time to time to a few of the ablest of the young people, and I let these fledgelings try their hand at conducting.'

"To hear their own works and to try their hand at things is just what the students of our Conservatoire have been clamouring for years to be allowed to do. We have to teach these poor young things the subtle, impalpable art of combining sounds so as to make music, and we try to do it by methods of persuasion, by drawing comparisons, by reasoning with them on paper. The whole elaborate system of auditory sensations can only be analysed by them with their eyes. You might just as well give lessons in water-colour to an Institution of the Blind.

"*Ensemble* classes for orchestra, chorus, and chamber music, which are practical lectures on the application of the higher grades of study, are absolutely necessary for anyone who wants to know his business thoroughly, whether he is to be a composer or a conductor. At Moscow, Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig, Brussels and other places you will find them. In other

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Conservatoires all over the world every time a pupil in the composition class produces a symphonic work which the professor thinks good enough, the parts are copied and the orchestra plays it. What better lesson could you possibly have then than that of experience? The other day Safonov let me hear an exercise in simple counterpoint and a quite respectable fugue which the chorus was working at; that was the distinction awarded to the winners of the two first prizes in the class.

“Another interesting article from the official regulations at the Moscow Conservatoire runs: ‘Every year the pupils of the operatic class have to learn at least three entire operas. Once a year there is a public performance, with scenery and costumes.’ Here is a list of some of the operas performed: *Fidelio*, *Così fan tutte*, *Matrimonio Segreto* (Cimarosa), *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Freischütz*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Waffenschmidt* (Lortzing), *Eugene Oniegin* (Tchaikovsky), *Ruth* (Ippolitov-Ivanov), *Raphael* (Arensky). The public performances have hitherto been held in the huge State Opera-house, but when the new concert-room at the Conservatoire is ready, they will be held there. There, too, the splendid fortnightly concerts of the Imperial Musical Society will be given instead of, as at present, in the



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elegant room at the Club of the Nobility. These concerts, too, are conducted by Safonov with his profound sense of style and his superbly authoritative readings."

It is perhaps to this extremely practical education that young Russian composers owe their love of the orchestra and their precocious skill in scoring. When they come before the public they have already acquired some sort of symphonic experience, due to the excellent system of training which unfortunately is unknown with us, and they are already familiar with the special characteristics and uses of each instrument in the orchestra. They are no longer walking with their eyes shut ; they already have a very good notion of what they are doing.

Moreover, if orchestral music is held in special honour in Russia, as it obviously is from what I have stated, chamber music in the shape of the string quartet and its derivatives, is cultivated with equal ardour ; so that, with opera as well, Russia possesses the three main branches of the highest forms of music.

To sum up. The musical movement in Russia covers a complete field ; the composers keep it going with astonishing zeal and enthusiasm ; the interpreters are there, thanks to the thorough training of the Conservatoires ; and the public is ready to learn and to be

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initiated in the noblest and severest realms of musical thought. The Russian school has profited by the preliminary studies of the three schools of the West during the three preceding centuries. It has not been obliged to waste time in useless and often discouragingly tentative essays. With its very original folk-music, which it has skilfully turned to account, it has been able to command new musical resources and to apply them with immense effect. To-day this school is in the full flower of a vigorous manhood and seems destined for a glorious future. It is not too much, surely, to suppose that some day it may give fresh life to the shifting shapes and ever-changing forms of musical art, and may take its place triumphantly at the head of the musical nations of Europe.

## THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST  
IN WHICH ARE CONTAINED  
THE MOST IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING  
CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS REIGN  
FROM HIS MARRIAGE TO HIS DEATH

BY  
JOHN BURNET  
BISHOP OF SALISBURY  
AND  
OF ELY

LONDON  
Printed by J. Sturges, at the Angel in St. Dunstons Church-yard, 1724

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
THE FIRST  
CONTAINING  
THE HISTORY OF HIS REIGN  
FROM HIS MARRIAGE TO HIS DEATH

THE SECOND  
CONTAINING  
THE HISTORY OF HIS REIGN  
FROM HIS DEATH TO HIS BURIAL

THE HISTORY OF THE  
REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST  
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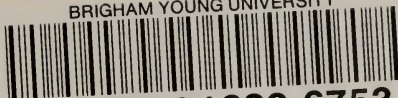
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